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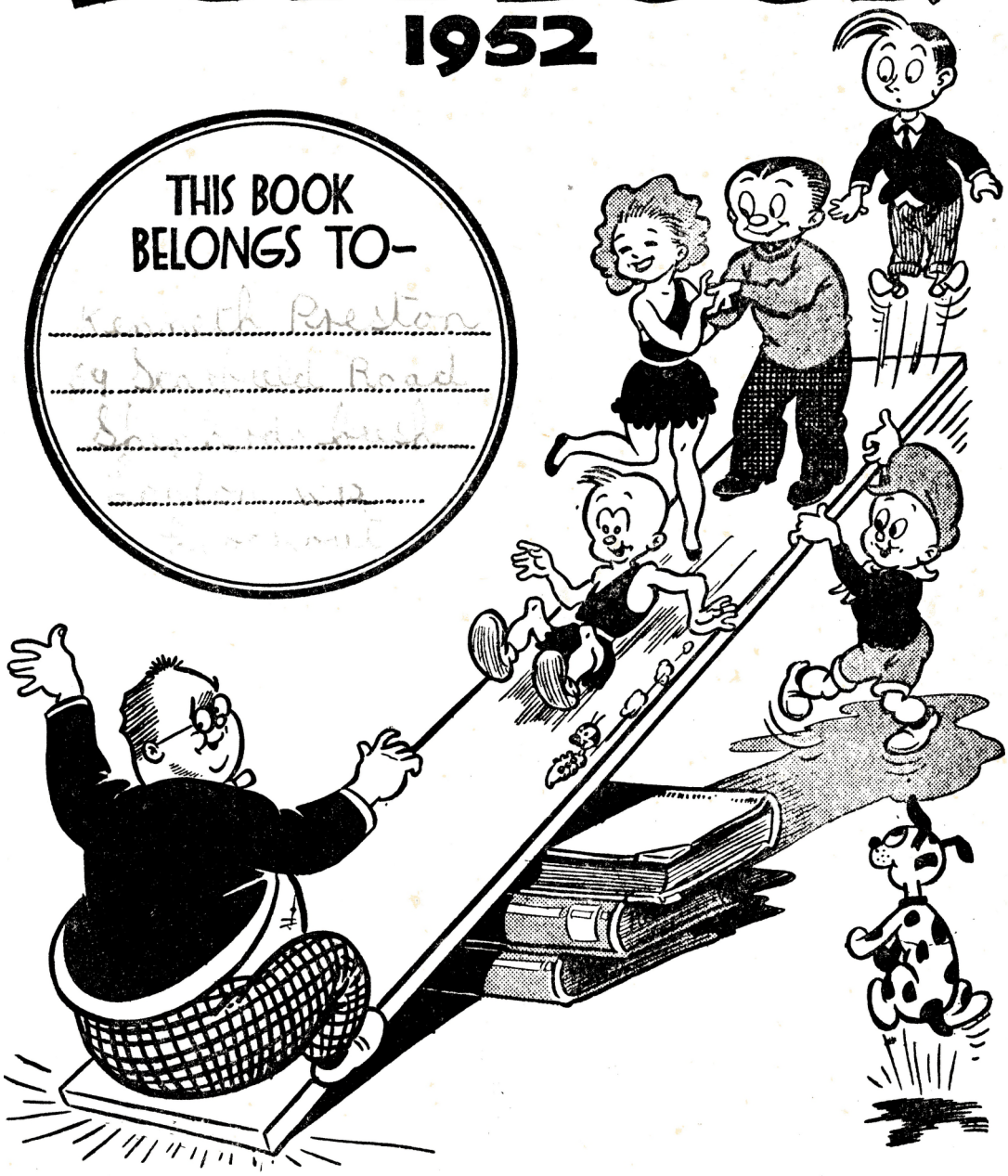

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There was the Fourth Form—all except Tom Tuffen—singing lustily—
'Good King Wenceslas'

THE GIRL WHO COULDN'T SING

A Christmas Story of the Fourth Form at St. Clement's

By MARTIN FRAZER

Carol, Carol Gaily

CAROL BAXTER could sing! There was no doubt about that. She could sing like an angel. Many of the girls declared that Deanna Durbin at her best couldn't hold a candle to Carol Baxter.

Carol's mother, so it was said, was a famous concert singer, but of course she appeared on programmes under her maiden name, and as nobody at St. Clement's knew what Carol's mother's maiden name was—and Carol never went around bragging—nobody could really prove anything.

But it was only natural, when there was singing to be done for Miss Lucy Loveday, the girls' mistress, to call upon Carol Baxter.

Miss Loveday, known simply as The Battleaxe, always seized eagerly upon any chance of a song. If she could add some acting and pageantry, so much the better.

But many of the fellows and girls took a dim view of her activities and did their best to dodge her when the musical fever had her in its grip.

But Christmas was looming near. In another week would come the end of term,

the usual hectic festivities, and then the breaking up and departure for home—and all that that meant at Christmas !

So, the Battleaxe got out her Carol Books and persuaded Dr. Pelham, the Head—known as The Plum—that singing carols was both educational and enjoyable, and a grand, musical Christmas Pageant just the thing for the festive season.

She roped in all who couldn't dodge her, and she concentrated on the Fourth Form for her principal carol party. The girls didn't seem to mind much. Brenda Drake declared it was fun. Freda Price said it was better than swotting algebra and French, anyway. Margery Manners and Grace Fuller and most of the other girls had no real objection and, after all, Christmas only comes once a year.

But the fellows groaned in chorus. Some of them could sing—if allowed to choose their own songs from those they heard on the radio. But to stand around on a cold evening, under the hard, glittering skies, and bellow Nowell—well, they could think of lots of better ways of enjoying themselves.

Jimmy Topper and Jack Lee were resigned to it. Dick Loring said that as the girls were there he'd manage to make some fun if none happened naturally. Peter Glynn and Bill Drake could not sing the high notes and thought they'd dodged the column until the Battleaxe formed them into second sopranos, or altos !

Danny Deacon and the rest of the Fourth had to turn up too. Only Tom Tuffen escaped because he just could not sing a note. He often did utter noises he called singing, but in actual fact he was tone deaf and didn't know one note from another. In fact, as Jimmy Topper said, the only note Tom ever knew for certain was a ten bob one ! The Battleaxe heard him once—and that was enough. His croak made her shudder and turn pale and she forbade him ever to join her glee party again. Whereupon lots of other fellows tried to croak like Tom but they couldn't manage it. That horrible racket Tom called singing was a gift, born with him.

So there came the evening, after tea, when the shades of night were closing down, and the snow lay thick on everything, and the Battleaxe got the notion of singing in the open air, making a tour of the school buildings.

Brenda stood there stricken with horror. The snowball had hit Dr. Pelham full in the face !

There was the Fourth—all except Tom Tuffen—standing in the snow-covered quad, singing lustily ' Good King Wenceslas.' The fellows didn't mind that so much. It was pretty easy and they could take the parts of the King while the girls chimed in on behalf of the page.

It was followed by ' Holy Night.'

" Carol Baxter will sing the second verse as a solo," announced the Battleaxe, " then we all join in the last verse."

They sang the first verse—and waited. Nothing happened !

The Battleaxe looked around, peering through the uncertain light. " Where is Carol ? " she asked sharply.

But Carol Baxter just wasn't there !

" Sing it together," snapped the Battleaxe. So they finished the carol.

" And now," the Battleaxe went on, " go right through ' Nowell.' Keep together and don't go flat. Sing it right through while I go and find Carol."

It was artful of the Battleaxe. ' Nowell,' sung right through from beginning to end is quite some length. She would have time to go all the way to the girl's studies and find Carol Baxter before they could come to the end of it.

The singing went on—and on. With no one really in charge, it became a trifle ragged and breathless. They were grinning at each other, too.

But what was more important, Tom Tuffen lurked in the shadows by the school house door. With all his chums warbling for the Battleaxe he was at a loose end. Quite a number of the Third Form kids were hanging around there, too—and most had snowballs in their hands.

' Nowell ' went on—and on. Brenda Drake was letting it go with the full force of her lungs—" No-o-well, No-o-well—— "

Tom could stand it no longer. He could see Brenda with her head well back, letting rip on the high notes. He grabbed a snowball and let drive !

Brenda was singing—" No-o-we—ploof ! "

That snowball got her right on the mouth.

The singing stopped. There was a roar of laughter—but not for long. Brenda never suffered things like that without doing something to get her own back. She saw Tom standing there, laughing his silly head off.

Naturally, she hastily made a snowball and let fly. Tom saw it coming and ducked. It hit a Third Form kid on the ear. And that started it. More snowballs came back at the carol party and in an instant the battle was on. Snowballs whizzing through the air from all quarters—the carol party versus the rest !

But Brenda was after Tom. She chased him round and round the quad until he dodged round the corner of the school house. Brenda was cautious. A snowball in her hand she cautiously approached that corner.

There were lights in the school house—light that gushed out into the quad and cast shadows. Brenda saw the shadow on the snow of someone approaching, close to the wall. She didn't study the shadow much, feeling sure it was Tom coming back to the attack.

She waited—her arm drawn back—and then, at the correct moment she hurled her snowball with all her might.

Bl-oomp ! It hit somebody in the face—and a mortar board went flying.

Brenda stood there stricken with horror. The Plum was there before her—snow all over his face and trickling down his neck ! There was no escape—in any case, Brenda would have had to own up.

" Ooh ! I—I'm sorry, sir," she said. " I—you see—I was expecting somebody else to come round the corner ! "

The Plum wiped as much snow from his face as he could and he looked stern.

" I can well understand that, Brenda," he said. " I accept your apology. You may go."

" Th-thank you, sir," said Brenda.

The snowballing had ceased as if by magic. The Third Form kids had vanished completely. The carol party just had to stay there.

Brenda turned her back on the Plum and walked forward to join the carollers—

Plonk ! A snowball hit her squarely on the back of the neck ! She spun round—but all she could see was the Plum, calmly walking away, his mortar board on his head at a rather jaunty angle.

Then he half turned and grinned at her.

The Fourth cheered! It was the sporting thing they liked—the Plum having his joke—getting his own back.

But the Plum wasn't taking any risks. He took to his heels and ran to the school house and the Fourth showered him with snowballs until he vanished into a doorway. At no other time, but Christmas, would they have dared to take such liberties with the Head.

Only the Battleaxe arrived, grim and forbidding. A snowball whistled past her nose.

"How—dare you!" she cried. "Didn't I tell you——"

"No-o-well!" chorused the Fourth. "No-o-well—No-o-well—"

But the zest had gone from the singing. Even the Battleaxe didn't seem to care so much about it.

"That will be enough for tonight," she announced. And the Fourth fled while they had the chance.

The Topperites chuckled as they went off to the Common Room. "The Plum's a real sport" they decided.

"The Battleaxe isn't so bad," declared Freda Price. "Her bark's worse than her bite. But she seemed properly upset about Carol."

"I wonder what happened to Carol, anyway?" asked Jimmy Topper.

The bell for Prep sounded and they had to separate—the boys to their section of the building—the girls to theirs.

Everybody seemed merry and bright, all looking forward to the Christmas festivities and the end of term.

But from one study came sobbing! Brenda Drake and Margery Manners heard it as they were going along the corrider. They paused, glancing at each other. Then, they turned and opened the door.

Carol Baxter was there, in her study, seated at the table, her head on her arms—just sobbing.

Brenda closed the door. Margery went to Carol and laid a hand on her shoulder.

Margery laid a hand on Carol's shoulder. "What's up, old girl?" she asked. "Did the Battleaxe come down heavy on you?"

"What's up, old girl?" she asked. "Did the Battleaxe come down heavy on you?"

Carol brushed Margery away.

"Go away!" she sobbed. "Let me alone! I can't sing, I tell you! I can't sing!"

"Don't be silly," put in Brenda. "You can sing—better than any of us——"

Carol raised her tear-stained face and stared at them.

"You don't understand!" she said, huskily. "I can't sing—not about Christmas— and good cheer—and all that! I've got no home now—nothing——"

She buried her head in her hands again and sobbed anew. And Brenda and Margery could only stand there watching her—a great pity in their hearts.

Friends Indeed

BRENDA and Margery hardly knew how it happened. They were one on each side of Carol, comforting her as best they could.

"Isn't there anything we can do?" asked Margery.

Carol shook her head. " There's nothing anybody can do," she said, thickly. " I wasn't going to tell anybody but—it's Mum and Dad—they've quarrelled. They aren't going to live together any more. I've got to stay here for Christmas—not that I care so much about myself only—don't you see—— "

Her voice trailed away into silence. Brenda and Margery looked aghast. To have no home to go to—at Christmas ! To have a home shattered, like that—at Christmas !

They could hardly ask for details. It was not their affair. They couldn't ask Carol why her mother and father had quarrelled. It seemed like prying into her private business.

No wonder the Battleaxe had looked so upset !

" But everybody was looking forward to hearing you sing at the Christmas Pageant," said Brenda.

" How can I sing ? " said Carol, hopelessly. " In any case, you know how it is. We're to find our own costumes for the Pageant. Mine will cost two pounds and I can't somehow write to Dad and ask for money—— "

" Forget it," said Margery, with a meaning glance at Brenda. " Listen to me, Carol. You're not spending Christmas here. We're having a big ' do ' at home and you're going to stay with me at Whitegates Farm. I'll fix it ! As for the Pageant—I'll fix that, too. You see if I don't ! Now, keep your pecker up. Things might turn out better than you imagine."

Brenda backed Margery up for all she was worth, and when they eventually went off to their own study, Carol was certainly a trifle more cheerful.

Brenda and Margery were not cheerful.

" What rotten luck ! " said Brenda.

" Poor kid," said Margery. " We've got to help her somehow."

" We can't go and knock her parents' heads together to make them see sense," said Brenda.

" We've got to get that two pounds for her," declared Margery. " It's the least we can do ! It'll make her feel that somebody cares——"

" I'm broke—after buying presents and things—— "

" We'll drag the others in on this," said Margery, firmly.

And the next day the Topperites got together and discussed the matter.

" People who smash up homes ought to get a good hiding, " declared Tom Tuffen. That was his cure for everything—a good hiding !

" That's not very helpful," said Jack Lee. " We don't know what Mr. and Mrs. Baxter have quarrelled about."

" Maybe I could find out," said Margery. " They live over the other side of Brookville. My people might have heard something. But I don't like trying to find out."

" It's none of our business," said Jimmy Topper, " and we've no right to poke our noses in. We can only try to make it up to Carol as far as we can."

" I've fixed it for her to come to Whitegates," said Margery. " But there's the two pounds—— "

" Hopeless," said Dick Loring. "We're all hard up. It's the most expensive time of the year—— "

" I'll get it, from home," said young Sir Peter Glynn.

" You will not ! " growled Tom Tuffen. " It's too easy—just because your mother is rich ! We've all got to have a hand in this. We'll have to earn the money somehow."

" Just how can we do that ? " asked Bill Drake.

"Well," Tom knitted his brows in deep thought. " We could go carolling down in Brookville—break bounds tomorrow evening—— "

" What ? " cried Dick Loring. " You—with your foghorn voice—— "

" Don't be funny," retorted Tom. " You lot can sing. I'll take the box round and collect the dibs."

" It's a thought," agreed Freda Price. " I'm game ! "

" So am I," said Grace Fuller.

" Put it to the vote," suggested Peter Glynn.

But there was no need. The hands went up before Jimmy asked and the matter was settled.

Naturally, they said not a word to a soul, because the fewer who knew they meant to break bounds, the better. They made their arrangements secretly and carefully.

The Battleaxe was in a bad temper all that day. It wasn't that she lacked sympathy for Carol, but she saw her Pageant being ruined by the loss of her best singer. And like the Topperites she felt angry with Carol's parents for causing so much unhappiness.

Still, that part of the affair was beyond the influence of anybody at St. Clement's, it seemed. The Topperites were interested only in doing something for Carol so that she should buck herself up and forget her troubles for a little while.

The next evening, instead of going to their studies for Prep, the Topperites crept away out into the snow-covered quad and away through the shrubberies to the boundary fence. They had got their bikes there during the afternoon, and it hadn't been easy to do it secretly and unobserved.

The fellows got the bikes over the fence to the lane. One by one, they clambered over, mounted their bikes and rode away. It was tough going in the lane but when they reached the main road it was easier. The traffic had pressed the snow down fairly hard. The surface was treacherous and there was a constant danger of skids, but they took the risk.

" Which is the best part of Brookville to tackle," asked Jack Lee.

Margery was riding beside him. She had been born and bred in those parts and knew the answer.

" Over the other side," she said. " The moneyed people live there."

" You show us the way," said Jack.

So Margery took the lead. They went right through the centre of Brookville to the 'posher,' residential area until Margery called a halt.

The man had one leg over the window sill when Tom grabbed him. " Out you come ! " he growled.

" This ought to do," she said.

They parked their bikes round a tree and approached the first house. They started carolling—nervously, at first. As Dick Loring whispered : " I do feel an onion ! "

They were all self-conscious, to begin with, but the Battleaxe had knocked a bit of sense into them concerning singing and the effect wasn't too bad.

Tom Tuffen went from door to door

collecting. He had made himself a neat box with a slit in the top to accommodate half-crowns. He got mostly pennies with an occasional sixpence.

He wasn't doing too badly until one irate house-holder said: "Have you a police permit for this, young man?"

"Crumbs," exclaimed Tom. "I didn't know we had to have one."

The gent slammed the door in his face and he went back to the chums to report.

But Jack Lee, who hoped to be a barrister one day, pooh-poohed the idea. "There have been police bans on carolling in some towns," he said, "but not Brookville. That, I do know. Anyway, we're doing it for a good cause, and not for ourselves——"

"Better try the next street, anyway," said Jimmy.

It was dark, by this time, and that gave them greater confidence. They rendered 'Nowell' in perfect style. Margery and Grace even attempted the descant, although Peter Glynn reckoned they cracked on the top notes.

They went from street to street and Tom's box was rattling encouragingly. The chums were giving a good rendering of 'Good King Wenceslas' when Tom knocked at a door. It opened and he found himself staring at Tom Gadney, the Captain of Brookville Grammar School.

There had always been enmity between St. Clement's fellows and the Grammar Grubs, and Gadney owed a good many grudges to the Topperites for the way they had handled him at times.

"Well—of all the nerve!" spluttered Gadney.

Tom had to bolt for it. Gadney had other Grammar Grubs in the house and they came running to do battle. At any other time, Tom would have fought a dozen of them, but the chums dared not get mixed up in a brawl at that moment.

"Look out!" shouted Tom. "It's Gadney and the Grammar Grubs!"

Snowballs began to whizz, but the chums were on their bikes and riding. They went round two blocks and dodged the Grammar Grubs completely.

"Fancy—running away from Gadney," moaned Dick Loring.

"It can't be helped," said Freda Price. "Let's get on with the job. This looks a likely road——"

"Hold it!" hissed Tom.

He was staring across the road. They all looked and saw the dark figure of a man opening a ground floor window. He was getting in over the sill.

"Burglars," whispered Grace Fuller.

Tom thrust the money-box into her hand and went darting across the road. He leapt the gate into the front garden. The man half turned, but he still had one leg over the window sill when Tom grabbed him.

"Oh, no, you don't!" growled Tom. "Out you come!"

"Let go, you idiot!" hissed the man. "Shut up your noise!"

"You can't fool me!" retorted Tom.

The man came out, backwards and fell sprawling. In an instant he was on his feet. Jimmy Topper and the others were running across the road.

"Hold him!" shouted Dick.

Tommy lunged forward, and the man hit out at him. That was what Tom wanted. When it came to a fight he was in his element. He dodged and hit back. They were hard at it when the chums came through the gateway to lend a hand.

The racket was enough to arouse the whole neighbourhood, and suddenly lights went on in the house, the front door was flung open and a lady, in a house coat, stood there, a shot gun in her hands.

"What's going on?" she asked sharply. "Stop it—or I'll shoot!"

Goodwill

THE fight stopped. Nobody knew whether the gun was loaded and nobody particularly wanted to find out. The chums and their prisoner just stood and gaped.

The lady fixed her gaze on the prisoner. "So it's you!" she said coldly.

"I didn't want to disturb you, Mary," said the prisoner. "I'd forgotten my key—"

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Tom. "Then you're not a burglar."

The man was released. He rounded on Tom, angrily

" Of course not, you fool ! " he exclaimed. " If you'd given me a chance to explain—— "

" Sorry about that," said Tom, " but you did look as if you were breaking into the house."

The lady set her gun down in the corner behind the door.

" Don't worry," she said, with sarcasm. " It was all a mistake. My husband forgot his key and tried to get in without disturbing me—— "

" You said you were going to bed early," he added.

" And you happened to come—along—— " She was studying them. " Quite a party," she said. She spotted Brenda's gym tunic. Brenda's coat was open. The St. Clement's crest on the pocket was clearly visible. " From St. Clement's," the lady added. " You're a long way from the school."

" We're carolling, actually," said Peter Glynn.

" Too many carollers round here," the lady said, sharply. " That's why the hall was in darkness. Still, you meant well, trying to arrest a burglar. What are you collecting for ?"

Freda was holding the money box and the lady was looking straight at her.

" Well," faltered Freda, " it's hard to explain—— "

" For yourselves, I suppose," said the man, with a sneer. " I won't encourage begging—— "

" Who's begging ? " exclaimed Dick Loring, impulsively. " And it's not for ourselves, at all ! "

" We wouldn't do it for ourselves," said Brenda. " It's one of the girls—had bad luck. She's a lovely singer but she can't take part in the Pageant. She wants two pounds but she can't very well send home for the money. You see, her father and mother have had no end of a row—at least, that's as far as we can make out—and now she's got no home—— "

" Pretty rotten, if you ask me," said Grace Fuller. " We can't expect Carol to sing about goodwill and all that, and she's had her home smashed up—— "

The lady and gentleman just stood there very still. They were like statues.

" So we had to do something to help the poor kid," explained Jimmy. " We've got precious little money left and some silly

Chalky White, the master of the Fourth, was at the foot of the stairs. " You are to go to the Head's study, immediately ! " he snapped.

chump suggested this way of trying to get it for her."

The man took out his wallet. He drew out two pound notes, folded them as small as he could and thrust them through the slit of the money-box.

"It—it's real tough," he said, hoarsely. "But hadn't you better get back. Time's getting on, you know."

Jack glanced at his wrist watch and gasped. "We'll be lucky if we're in time for supper," he said. "Come on!"

"I hope I never hurt you, sir," said Tom.

"Forget it," replied the man. "It's all right!"

The chums trooped away to their bikes.

"Well, that was decent of him, anyway," said Tom Tuffen, "but he couldn't blame us for thinking he was a burglar."

"Don't waste time jawing about it," said Jimmy. "We've got to get back. I didn't notice how late it is."

They cycled back out of Brookville. It was real hard going and they had to force the pace wherever possible. Luckily, there wasn't much traffic on the road. A lorry and a private car passed them, going the same way. A bus thundered past—the last bus to Brookville—and that was about all they saw.

They got back to St. Clement's by the same route as they had left it—over the boundary fence. They had to sneak through the shrubberies to the cycle shed and leave their bikes there. Then they crossed the quad to the school house.

There was a car standing on the Drive close to the main doors but that was nothing to do with them. The point was, could they get to their studies unseen. Another point was, had they been missed by anybody important?

They had! Chalky White, the master of the Fourth, was there, at the foot of the stairs. The Battleaxe was conversing with him, and she was all smiles!

Chalky turned and eyed the chums, severely. "You are to go to the Head's study, immediately!" he snapped.

"Peace on earth!" groaned Dick Loring. "We've had it!"

They trooped off, looking apprehensive, to say the least.

Jimmy tapped on the door. The Plum called: "Come in!" The door opened and they marched in, fearing the worst.

And there was Carol Baxter, as radiantly happy as ever she could look. The lady and gentleman were there——

"Well, I'm bothered!" exclaimed Brenda—then realised where she was. "Sorry, sir!" she added.

The Plum was beaming at her. "It's lucky for you it's Christmas," he said, "otherwise I'd have punished you all, severely, for breaking bounds. Under the circumstances——"

His voice tailed away. Carol between the lady and gentleman. No need to explain much. The chums could see the likenesses.

"It's all right, now," said Carol.

Mr. Baxter even went so far as to explain. Carol's mother wanted to go on with her singing career and he had tried to stop her. That was what the row was all about. They had agreed to separate—but that was all over. He blamed himself for being obstinate—and Mrs. Baxter said it was her fault for being selfish. Anyway, they had come to an agreement at last—and what it was didn't matter. Carol's home was not smashed up.

Tom Tuffen took the money-box and broke it open. He handed Mr. Baxter back his two pounds—but they were refused.

"Share it amongst you," he said. "You earned it!"

"But," added the Plum, "if ever you do a thing like that again, there will be trouble! You may go!"

So they departed, chuckling. And the Battleaxe was not far away. "Carol rehearsal for fifteen minutes after supper," she announced.

"I shall be sick of carols by the time Christmas is over," muttered Bill Drake.

But, after supper, they had to go out in the snow. A lovely, clear voice sang though the frosty darkness:

"Still, the night! Holy, the night——"

Carol had never sung more beautifully in her life. Maybe, she would never sing so well again.

And Tom Tuffen, lurking in the shadows, sniffed and brushed something off his cheek. It might have been a fly!

THE END.

A Christmas CAROL

By *Charles Dickens*

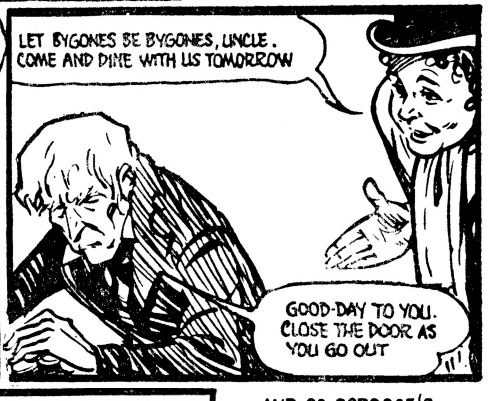
TOD AND ANNIE, TWO WANDERING ORPHANS HAVE FOUND A HOME FOR CHRISTMAS WITH JOVIAL OLD TOBY PRINT. AND AS THE WIND HOWLS IN THE CHIMNEY AND THE LOGS CRACKLE ON THE HEARTH, HE STARTS TO TELL THEM THE STORY OF "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

IN LONDON A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A FIRM CALLED SCROOGE AND MARLEY. JACOB MARLEY, HOWEVER, WAS DEAD. I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT- OR ELSE NOTHING WONDERFUL CAN COME OF WHAT I AM GOING TO TELL YOU
A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Scrooge & Marley General Merchants
YES- JACOB MARLEY WAS DEAD ... BUT SCROOGE HAD NEVER BOTHERED TO PAINT OUT HIS NAME ON THE DOOR. HE WAS A TIGHT-FISTED OLD SKINFLINT WAS EBENEZER SCROOGE

MERRY CHRISTMAS? BAH! WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO BE MERRY ABOUT? YOU'RE POOR ENOUGH
AND WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO BE DISMAL ABOUT? -YOU'RE RICH ENOUGH

YOU MARRIED AGAINST MY WISHES. I WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU. GO AWAY AND KEEP CHRISTMAS IN YOUR OWN WAY AND LET ME KEEP IT IN MINE

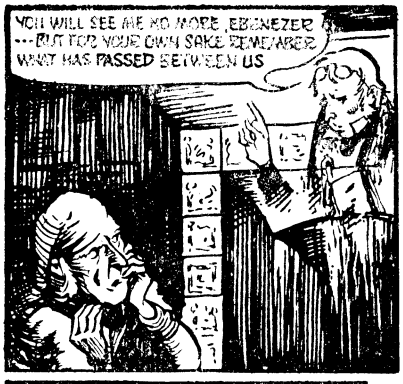


I'M SORRY TO FIND YOU SO UNBENDING UNCLE - BUT I'LL KEEP MY CHRISTMAS HUMOUR TO THE LAST- A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!
AND A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU TOO!

AND SO SCROOGE'S NEPHEW DEPARTED. BUT AS HE DID SO, TWO OTHER GENTLEMEN APPROACHED. THEY WERE MAKING A CHRISTMAS COLLECTION FOR THE POOR

SCROOGE AND MARLEY! LET US TRY HERE, MY FRIEND
Scrooge Marley General Merchants
HAVE I THE PLEASURE OF ADDRESSING MR. SCROOGE OR MR. MARLEY?
MARLEY HAS BEEN DEAD THESE SEVEN YEARS---WHAT DO YOU WANT?
THIS IS THE SEASON OF GOODWILL, MR. SCROOGE AND WE ARE MAKING A COLLECTION TO AID THOSE WHO CANNOT AID THEMSELVES
ARE THERE NO PRISONS? - NO WORKHOUSES? THOSE WHO ARE BADLY OFF MUST GO THERE
BUT MANY WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DO THAT!
WELL, LET 'EM! IT'LL DECREASE THE SURPLUS POPULATION
SCROOGE'S VISITORS DEPARTED - NO RICHER THAN THEY HAD COME. THE AFTERNOON WORE ON, AND AT LENGTH THE TIME FOR CLOSING THE OFFICE ARRIVED
I SUPPOSE YOU'LL WANT THE WHOLE DAY OFF TOMORROW, BOB CRATCHIT?
IF CONVENIENT MR. SCROOGE
IT ISN'T CONVENIENT. AND IT'S NOT FAIR ··· THAT'S A DAYS WAGES I PAY YOU FOR NOTHING BAH!
THE OFFICE WAS CLOSED, BOB CRATCHIT RAN OFF HOME. ON HIS WAY HE WENT DOWN A SLIDE ON CORNHILL, IN HONOUR OF ITS BEING CHRISTMAS
THEN HE RAN ALL THE WAY TO CAMDEN TOWN AS HARD AS HE COULD PELT···
TO PLAY AT BLINDMAN'S BUFF WITH HIS CHILDREN
MEANWHILE SCROOGE HAD MADE HIS WAY TO THE GLOOMY HOUSE WHERE HE LIVED, ALONE····
····AND AS SCROOGE TURNED HIS KEY IN THE LOCK - A STRANGE THING HAPPENED·····
Jacob Marley
SCROOGE'S GLANCE CHANCED TO FALL ON THE DOOR-KNOCKER, AND IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT HE SUDDENLY SAW, NOT A KNOCKER BUT THE FACE OF HIS LONG-DEAD PARTNER··

J-JACOB MARLEY!
POOH! HUMBUG!
NONE THE LESS EBENEZER SCROOGE LOOKED CAREFULLY AROUND HIS FRONT DOOR AS THOUGH HE HALF EXPECTED TO FIND THE REST OF JACOB MARLEY BEHIND IT
BAH!
SCROOGE CLIMBED THE GLOOMY STAIRS — MUTTERING —
- HUNG UP HIS COAT —
- AND SAT DOWN BY HIS MISERLY FIRE TO EAT HIS BOWL OF GRUEL.
SUDDENLY, THE SOUND OF GHOSTLY BELLS BEGAN TO ECHO THROUGH THE LONELY HOUSE
THEN CAME A SOUND AS IF SOMEONE WAS DRAGGING A HEAVY CHAIN.....
...TOWARDS THE DOOR OF THAT VERY ROOM!
JACOB MARLEY!
HUMBUG! I WON'T BELIEVE IT!
WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME?
MUCH, EBENEZER ...MUCH.
IT IS REQUIRED OF EVERY MAN THAT THE SPIRIT WITHIN HIM GOES OUT AMONG HIS FELLOW MEN ... AND IF IT GOES NOT OUT IN LIFE ... THEN IT MUST DO SO AFTERWARDS
YOU ARE FETTERED - TELL ME WHY
I WEAR THE CHAIN I FORGED IN LIFE .... EVERY HARD BARGAIN I DROVE, EVERY KINDNESS I REFUSED FORGED ANOTHER LINK!
I AM HERE TONIGHT TO WARN YOU THAT YOU HAVE YET A CHANCE OF ESCAPING MY FATE. YOU WILL BE VISITED BY THREE SPIRITS. EXPECT THE FIRST WHEN THE BELL TOLLS ONE!

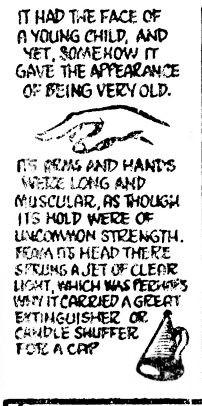

YOU WILL SEE ME NO MORE, EBENEZER --- BUT FOR YOUR OWN SAKE REMEMBER WHAT HAS PASSED BETWEEN US

UTTERLY TIRED OUT BY HIS WEIRD EXPERIENCE, SCROOGE CLIMBED INTO BED WITHOUT UNDRESSING, AND WAS SOON ASLEEP.....

HE WAS WAKENED BY A BELL..
DING! DONG!
THAT'S HALF FAST!

BONG!
ONE O'CLOCK! THE HOUR ITSELF!

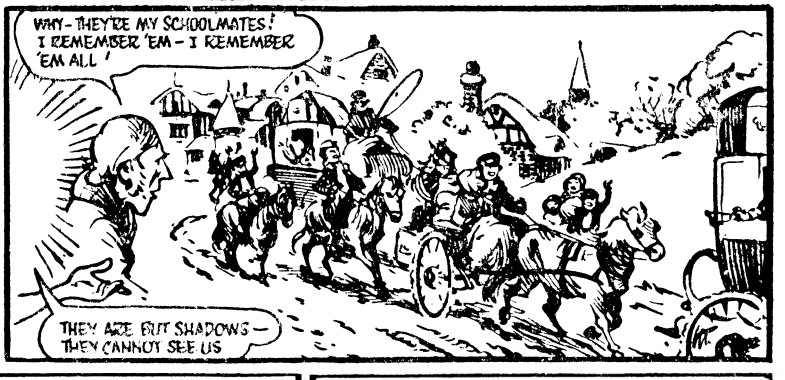
THE STROKE OF THE CLOCK HAD BARELY DIED AWAY, WHEN SCROOGE FOUND HIMSELF CONFRONTED BY A MOST EXTRAORDINARY BEING.....


IT HAD THE FACE OF A YOUNG CHILD, AND YET, SOMEHOW IT GAVE THE APPEARANCE OF BEING VERY OLD.
ITS ARMS AND HANDS WERE LONG AND MUSCULAR, AS THOUGH ITS HOLD WERE OF UNCOMMON STRENGTH. FROM ITS HEAD THERE STRUNG A JET OF CLEAR LIGHT, WHICH WAS PERHAPS WHY IT CARRIED A GREAT EXTINGUISHER OR CANDLE SNUFFER FOR A CAP

WH-WHO ARE YOU?
"I AM THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST - YOUR PAST. COME, WALK WITH ME. I WILL TAKE YOU UPON A JOURNEY

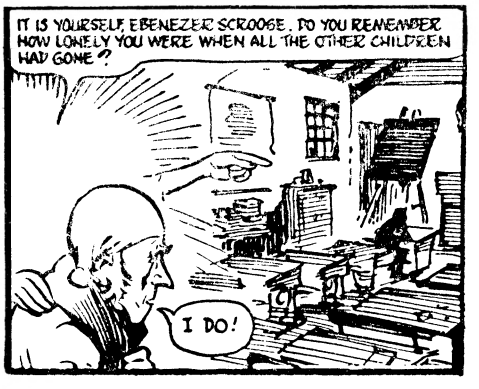
THE SPIRIT TOOK SCROOGE'S HAND IN ITS STRONG, THOUGH GENTLE GRASP, AND, MUCH TO HIS AMAZEMENT, LED HIM OUT THROUGH THE WALL OF HIS ROOM. OUTSIDE, THE CITY STREETS AND THE GLOOM HAD VANISHED, AND THEY FOUND THEMSELVES AMID SNOW-COVERED FIELDS

WHY - I KNOW THIS PLACE - I WAS A BOY HERE!


WHY - THEY'RE MY SCHOOLMATES! I REMEMBER 'EM - I REMEMBER 'EM ALL!
THEY ARE BUT SHADOWS - THEY CANNOT SEE US

THEIR SCHOOL HAS BROKEN UP FOR CHRISTMAS - THEY ARE ALL GOING HOME

BUT THE SCHOOL IS NOT QUITE EMPTY. THERE REMAINS A LONELY CHILD - NEGLECTED BY HIS FRIENDS AND PARENTS. DO YOU REMEMBER, SCROOGE?
I DO - I DO


IT IS YOURSELF, EBENEZER SCROOGE. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW LONELY YOU WERE WHEN ALL THE OTHER CHILDREN HAD GONE?
I DO!

REMEMBER HOW YOU SAT AND DAYDREAMED, SCROOGE - OF WONDERFUL PEOPLE, AND WONDERFUL PLACES YOU HAD READ ABOUT IN BOOKS?"
"LET US SEE ANOTHER CHRISTMAS" SAID THE GHOST TO SCROOGE —. SCROOGE'S FORMER SELF SEEMED TO GROW A LITTLE OLDER AT THE WORDS AND THE ROOM BECAME A LITTLE DARKER AND MORE DIRTY. SCROOGE KNEW THAT EVERYTHING HE SAW WAS AS IT HAD BEEN AND THAT THERE HE WAS ALONE AGAIN WHEN ALL THE OTHER BOYS AND GIRLS HAD GONE HOME FOR THE JOLLY HOLIDAYS
BROTHER — DEAR BROTHER — I'VE COME TO TAKE YOU HOME!
HOME?
HOME FOR GOOD AND ALL! FATHER'S MUCH KINDER THAN HE USED TO BE AND HOME'S LIKE HEAVEN. YOU'RE TO BE A MAN AND NEVER TO COME BACK HERE AGAIN - BUT FIRST WE'RE TO BE TOGETHER ALL THE CHRISTMAS LONG, AND HAVE THE MERRIEST TIME IN THE WORLD!
SO SCROOGE WAS TO LEAVE SCHOOL! THE SCHOOLMASTER CARRIED HIS TRUNK DOWN, AND PACKED THEM BOTH INTO THE CARRIAGE THAT WAS WAITING.
STONY-HEARTED THOUGH HE WAS, OLD SCROOGE FOUND HIMSELF STRANGELY MOVED BY THE MEMORIES OF HIS CHILDHOOD THAT THE GHOST HAD CONJURED UP. BUT HE HAD SCARCELY TIME TO WIPE A STRAY TEAR FROM HIS EYE, WHEN THE SCENE FADED AND ANOTHER TOOK IT'S PLACE
DO YOU KNOW THIS PLACE?
MISTER FEZZIWIG HIS WAREHOUSE
KNOW IT? WHY - I WAS APPRENTICED THERE
WHY - THERE'S OLD FEZZIWIG BLESS HIS HEART - AND DICK WILKINS - AND MYSELF!
YO HO! MY BOYS - NO MORE WORK TONIGHT - IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE! LET'S HAVE THE SHUTTERS UP! AND THEN WE'LL CLEAR AWAY. LET'S HAVE LOTS OF ROOM HERE THIS HAPPY NIGHT!

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED HOW THOSE TWO FELLOWS WENT AT IT! THEY CHARGED INTO THE STREET WITH THE SHUTTERS AND HAD 'EM UP, BARRED AND PINNED, BEFORE YOU COULD COUNT TEN!

AND CLEAR AWAY?..... THERE WASN'T ANYTHING THEY WOULDN'T HAVE CLEARED AWAY FOR OLD FEZZIWIG!

YES ~ BEFORE VERY LONG, THAT OLD WAREHOUSE WAS AS GAY AND BRIGHT AS A CHRISTMAS TREE!

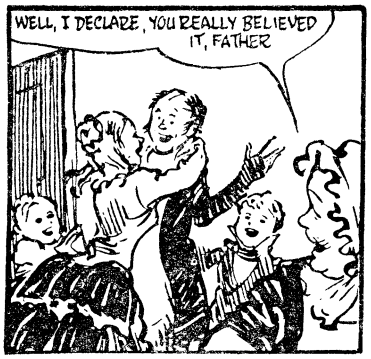
THEN ALL THE NEIGHBOURS BEGAN TO ARRIVE, TO BE GREETED BY MR FEZZIWIG AND HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTERS

THANK YOU, MASTER SCROOGE!

AND WHEN THEY HAD ALL HAD SOMETHING TO EAT AND A GLASS OF WINE – THE FIDDLER STRUCK UP A TUNE, AND THE DANCING BEGAN.
BUT ALL GOOD THINGS COME TO AN END AND AT LENGTH THE GUESTS DEPARTED
MISTER FEZZIWIG IS INDEED A GOOD MASTER – AND WHAT A WONDERFUL TIME WE'VE HAD THIS CHRISTMAS EVE, EBENEZER!
A SMALL MATTER, THAT FEZZIWIG SHOULD SPEND A FEW POUNDS OF MORTAL MONEY TO MAKE THESE SILLY FOLK HAPPY!
SMALL?
IT ISN'T SMALL, SPIRIT. FEZZIWIG HAD THE POWER TO MAKE US HAPPY IN SO MANY LITTLE WAYS, YOU COULDN'T COUNT 'EM UP SO THE HAPPINESS HE GAVE WAS QUITE AS GREAT AS IF IT HAD COST A FORTUNE
···· BUT THE GHOST HAS OTHER VISIONS WHICH SCROOGE MUST SEE..
MY TIME GROWS SHORT – WE MUST HURRY — HURRY!
REMEMBER YOURSELF AS YOU WERE THEN EBENEZER SCROOGE?
YOU HAVE CHANGED, EBENEZER. I HAVE SEEN YOUR NOBLER IDEALS VANISH ONE BY ONE. NOW YOU LIVE ONLY FOR MONEY – FOR GAIN
IF I HAVE GROWN WISER WHAT THEN? I AM NOT CHANGED TOWARDS YOU.
YOU HAVE. YOUR PROMISES TO ME WERE MADE WHEN WE WERE BOTH POOR. NOW YOU ARE RICH YOU ARE ANOTHER PERSON. SO PERHAPS YOUR PROMISES ARE BETTER BROKEN.
AND AS EBENEZER SCROOGE WATCHED THIS SCENE FROM HIS PAST HE REMEMBERED THE PANGS OF THAT PARTING.
SHOW ME NO MORE, SPIRIT. – SHOW ME NO MORE I BEG!
THERE IS YET ANOTHER SCENE THAT YOU MUST SEE, EBENEZER

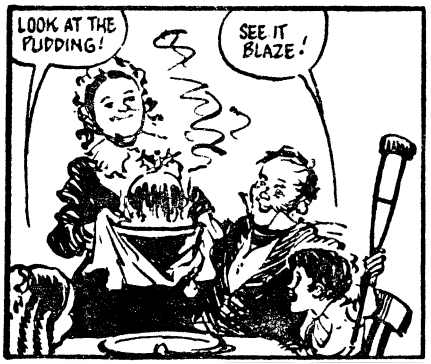
IT'S SHE AGAIN - GROWN OLDER, WITH HER FAMILY. WHAT A LOVELY FAMILY.
THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN YOUR OWN, SCROOGE - BUT YOU LOVED MONEY BETTER. REMEMBER?
DADDY! FATHER!
GOO!
LOOK WHAT I'VE GOT A JACK-IN-THE-BOX
OH! HOW LOVELY!
I SAW AN OLD FRIEND OF YOURS THIS AFTERNOON
OH? WHO WAS IT?
IT WAS MR. SCROOGE. I PASSED HIS OFFICE, AND HE HAD A CANDLE LIT. THERE HE SAT ALONE. QUITE ALONE IN THE WORLD I DO BELIEVE
SPIRIT! TAKE ME FROM THIS PLACE! I CANNOT BEAR IT!
I DO BUT SHOW YOU THE SHADOWS OF YOUR OWN PAST. IF IT DISTRESSES YOU — DO NOT BLAME ME
SCROOGE THREW HIMSELF AT THE GHOST AND WRESTLED WITH IT. NOW YOU'LL REMEMBER THAT I TOLD YOU OF THE HUGE CANDLE-SNUFFER THAT HUNG FROM IT'S GIRDLE. SCROOGE SEIZED THIS, AND BY A SUDDEN ACTION, PRESSED IT DOWN UPON THE SPIRIT'S HEAD.
AND AS HE STRUGGLED SCROOGE FOUND HIMSELF ONCE MORE IN HIS OWN BEDROOM···
HE WAS UNABLE QUITE TO EXTINGUISH THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS PAST AND HE WAS VERY TIRED. HIS GRIP RELAXED, AND HE BARELY MANAGED TO STAGGER TO HIS BED, BEFORE HE WAS DEEPLY ASLEEP AGAIN.
SCROOGE WOKE AGAIN AS THE BELL OF THE CLOCK TOLLED 'ONE'. WHETHER HE HAD SLEPT ALL THROUGH A DAY AND A NIGHT, HE KNEW NOT, NOR CARED. HE LOOKED AROUND FOR THE SECOND OF THE SPIRITS THAT JACOB MARLEY HAD TOLD HIM TO EXPECT··
····AT FIRST HE SAW NOTHING. THEN HE OBSERVED A BRIGHT LIGHT STREAMING UNDER THE DOOR OF THE ROOM
COME IN EBENEZER SCROOGE!
I AM THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT! LOOK UPON ME!

SPIRIT - TAKE ME WHERE YOU WILL. LAST NIGHT I WENT FORTH ON COMPULSION, BUT I LEARNED A LESSON THAT IS WORKING NOW. SHOW ME WHAT YOU WILL!
HOLD MY ROBE - AND LET US VIEW THIS PRESENT CHRISTMAS.
THE SPIRIT TOOK SCROOGE OUT INTO THE CITY STREETS ON THAT CHRISTMAS MORN
AND THEY WENT THROUGH THE STREETS, UNSEEN BY THE JOLLY CROWDS. THE GROCERS' SHOPS WERE OPEN .....
.... AND PEOPLE WERE TAKING THEIR CHRISTMAS DINNERS TO THE BAKEHOUSES TO BE COOKED
BAKER
FINALLY THEY CAME TO A LITTLE HUMBLE HOUSE.
THAT IS THE HOME OF YOUR CLERK, LITTLE BOB CRATCHIT. LET US SEE WHAT IS WITHIN.
SO SCROOGE FOUND HIMSELF IN BOB CRATCHIT'S LIVING ROOM. NOT THAT ANY OF THE CRATCHITS KNEW HE WAS THERE .....
WE COULD SMELL OUR GOOSE COOKING AT THE BAKERS MOTHER!
HERE'S SISTER MARTHA COMING, MOTHER!
SIT BY THE FIRE, DEAR. AND HAVE A WARM
HIDE WHEN FATHER COMES HOME WITH TINY TIM, MARTHA!
SO MARTHA HID BEHIND THE DOOR AND THEY ALL PRETENDED SHE WASN'T THERE ~

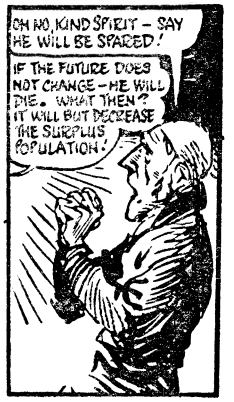


BOB CRATCHIT SAT DOWN TO MAKE A BOWL OF PUNCH BY THE FIRE. WHILE MASTER PETER WENT OFF TO FETCH THE GOOSE FROM THE BAKEHOUSE
WE'RE COMING TOO!

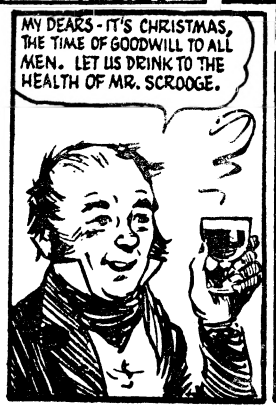
THE GOOSE DID NOT LAST LONG, AND YET, EKED OUT WITH APPLE SAUCE, AND MASHED POTATOES EVERY ONE OF THE CRATCHITS HAD ENOUGH TO EAT, AND WAS AS PLEASED AS IF IT HAD BEEN A LORD MAYOR'S BANQUET.



AT LAST THE FEAST WAS OVER. THEY ALL GATHERED IN A CIRCLE ABOUT THE FIRE, AND BOB POURED OUT GLASSES OF HOT PUNCH
A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO US ALL, MY DEARS
GOD BLESS US, EVERY ONE


OH NO, KIND SPIRIT — SAY HE WILL BE SPARED!
IF THE FUTURE DOES NOT CHANGE — HE WILL DIE. WHAT THEN? IT WILL BUT DECREASE THE SURPLUS POPULATION!

DECREASE THE SURPLUS POPULATION! THOSE WERE SCROOGE'S OWN WORDS! AND HOW HE HUNG HIS HEAD TO HEAR THEM REPEATED! HOW HE WISHED IN HIS HEART THAT HE HAD BEEN A KINDER MAN, AND THAT HE HAD TREATED BOB CRATCHIT BETTER. FIFTEEN SHILLINGS A WEEK - THAT WAS ALL HE PAID BOB — AND OUT OF IT HE SOMEHOW OBTAINED ALL THIS SIMPLE KINDLINESS. THERE WAS EVEN SOME TO SPARE FOR SCROOGE



LET US DRINK TO MR. SCROOGE, THE FOUNDER OF THIS FEAST
FOUNDER OF THE FEAST INDEED! I WISH I HAD THE OLD SKINFLINT HERE! I'D GIVE HIM A PIECE OF MY MIND

WATCHING THEM, OLD SCROOGE COULD NOT HELP SEEING THAT THE MERE MENTION OF HIS NAME CAST A GLOOM ON THE HAPPY PARTY, AND HE WISHED IN HIS HEART THAT IT WAS NOT SO. BUT THE GLOOM SOON PASSED, AS THEY SAT AROUND THE FIRE, TELLING TALES, ROASTING CHESTNUTS, AND LISTENING WHILE TINY TIM SANG A SONG
BUT AT LENGTH THE TIME CAME WHEN THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT TOOK EBENEZER BY THE HAND AND LED HIM AWAY FROM THE MERRY PARTY, AND OUT INTO THE STREETS.
THE STREETS FADED AWAY, AND THEY FOUND THEMSELVES WITHOUT WARNING, UPON A BLEAK AND DESOLATE MOOR···
WHAT IS THIS PLACE, SPIRIT?
IT IS A PLACE WHERE THE MINERS DWELL, WHO TOIL IN THE DEPTH OF THE EARTH. - LET US VISIT THEM
THEY TOO, KEEP CHRISTMAS, SCROOGE. BUT WE CANNOT TARRY. COME!
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
TO SCROOGE'S HORROR HE FOUND HIMSELF BORNE OVER THE WAVES OF A STORMY SEA. THEY WERE APPROACHING A SOLITARY LIGHTHOUSE. THE TWO MEN WHO TENDED THE LAMP WERE NOT FORGOTTEN BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
AGAIN THE GHOST SPED ON, UNTIL, FAR FROM ANY SHORE THEY CAME UPON A SHIP
A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YE, MR. MATE. I'LL TAKE A TURN AT THE WHEEL WHILE YE GO BELOW FOR A SPOT O' CHRISTMAS CHEER!
THANK YE CAP'N. - AND A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU, TOO!
MORE AND MORE IT WAS BROUGHT HOME TO EBENEZER SCROOGE, THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS WAS EVERYWHERE EXCEPT IN HIS OWN HEART! BUT HE HAD HARDLY TIME TO HEAVE A SIGH OF REGRET WHEN THE STORMY SCENE VANISHED AND HIS EARS WERE FILLED WITH THE SOUND OF HEARTY LAUGHTER···
IT WAS SCROOGE'S NEPHEW!
OLD UNCLE SCROOGE - HE SAID CHRISTMAS WAS HUMBUG - AND HE BELIEVED IT TOO!
MORE SHAME ON HIM, FRED - AND HIM SO RICH, TOO!
WHAT IF HE IS RICH, MY DEAR - HIS WEALTH DOES HIM NO GOOD HE DOESN'T EVEN MAKE HIMSELF COMFORTABLE WITH IT

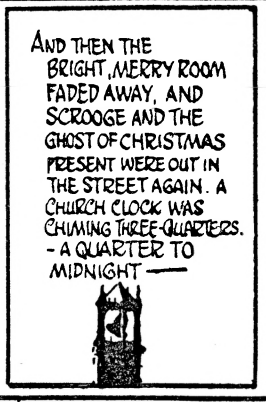
WHY - HE HASN'T EVEN THE SATISFACTION OF THINKING HE'LL EVER DO US ANY GOOD WITH IT! - I'M SURE I DON'T WANT HIS MONEY!
AND SCROOGE REMEMBERED THAT HE COULD HAVE GONE TO THIS PARTY OF HAPPY PEOPLE - IF ONLY HE HAD NOT BEEN SO SURLY THEN AS HE WATCHED, THE TEA THINGS WERE CLEARED AWAY, AND THEY ALL SETTLED DOWN TO A HAPPY EVENING
MR. TOPPER SANG A SONG .....
YOU SEE - THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY WIRELESS IN THOSE DAYS, AND SO THEY MADE THEIR OWN MUSIC.
AND THEN THEY HAD BLINDMAN'S BUFF .....
.. THOUGH WHEN MR. TOPPER BECAME "BLINDMAN" IT WAS TRULY ASTONISHING HOW HE WENT AFTER SCROOGE'S NIECE'S SISTER. HE DID NOT SEEM TO WANT TO CATCH ANYBODY ELSE .....
- AND THEN THEY HAD A GAME - A GUESSING GAME .....
I KNOW THE GAME!
NOW YOU MUST TRY AND FIND WHAT I AM THINKING OF. YOU MAY ASK ME QUESTIONS - BUT I MAY ONLY REPLY YES OR NO
WE'LL SOON GET THE HANG OF IT!
IS IT AN ANIMAL?
YES!
IS IT ALIVE?
YES!
IS IT A NICE ANIMAL?
NO!
DOES IT GROWL?
YES!
DOES IT LIVE IN A MENAGERIE?
NO!

I KNOW WHAT IT IS, FRED! I KNOW WHAT IT IS!

IT'S YOUR UNCLE SCROOGE!
YES!

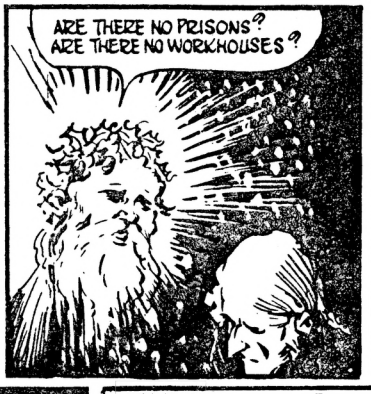
SO CHANGED WAS EBENEZER SCROOGE BY THE VISIONS THAT THE GHOSTS HAD SHOWN HIM THAT HE LAUGHED MORE THAN ANYONE AT THIS ····
AND HE WAS TOUCHED BY HIS NEPHEWS NEXT WORDS

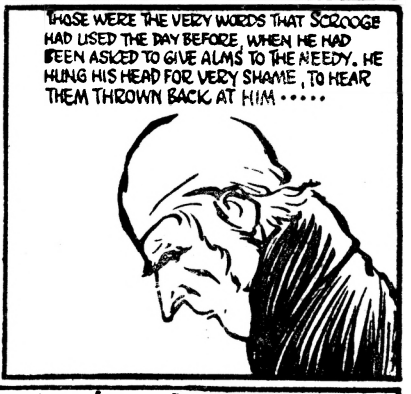
OLD UNCLE SCROOGE HAS GIVEN US A GOODLY LAUGH AND IT WOULD BE UNGRATEFUL NOT TO DRINK HIS HEALTH. AND SO I SAY- A MERRY CHRISTMAS, UNCLE SCROOGE!


AND THEN THE BRIGHT, MERRY ROOM FADED AWAY, AND SCROOGE AND THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT WERE OUT IN THE STREET AGAIN. A CHURCH CLOCK WAS CHIMING THREE-QUARTERS. - A QUARTER TO MIDNIGHT —

MY STAY ON EARTH ENDS AT MIDNIGHT - MY TIME IS GROWING SHORT!
FORGIVE ME, SPIRIT, IF I ASK - BUT WHAT ARE THOSE CREATURES THAT HIDE IN YOUR CLOAK?

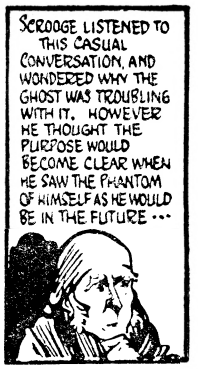
IT IS A BOY AND A GIRL
HAVE THEY NOWHERE TO GO? NO PLACE OF REFUGE?


ARE THERE NO PRISONS? ARE THERE NO WORKHOUSES?


THOSE WERE THE VERY WORDS THAT SCROOGE HAD USED THE DAY BEFORE, WHEN HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO GIVE ALMS TO THE NEEDY. HE HUNG HIS HEAD FOR VERY SHAME, TO HEAR THEM THROWN BACK AT HIM ·····

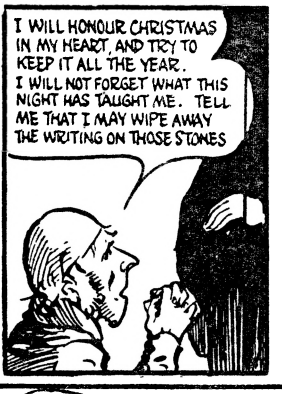
HE LIFTED HIS GAZE AS THE CLOCK CHIMED MIDNIGHT, AND FOUND THAT HE WAS ALONE.

HE REMEMBERED WHAT JACOB MARLEY HAD SAID "YOU WILL BE VISITED BY THREE SPIRITS ··" AND THEN HE SAW THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET-TO-COME APPROACHING ·····


SCROOGE LISTENED TO THIS CASUAL CONVERSATION, AND WONDERED WHY THE GHOST WAS TROUBLING WITH IT. HOWEVER HE THOUGHT THE PURPOSE WOULD BECOME CLEAR WHEN HE SAW THE PHANTOM OF HIMSELF AS HE WOULD BE IN THE FUTURE ···

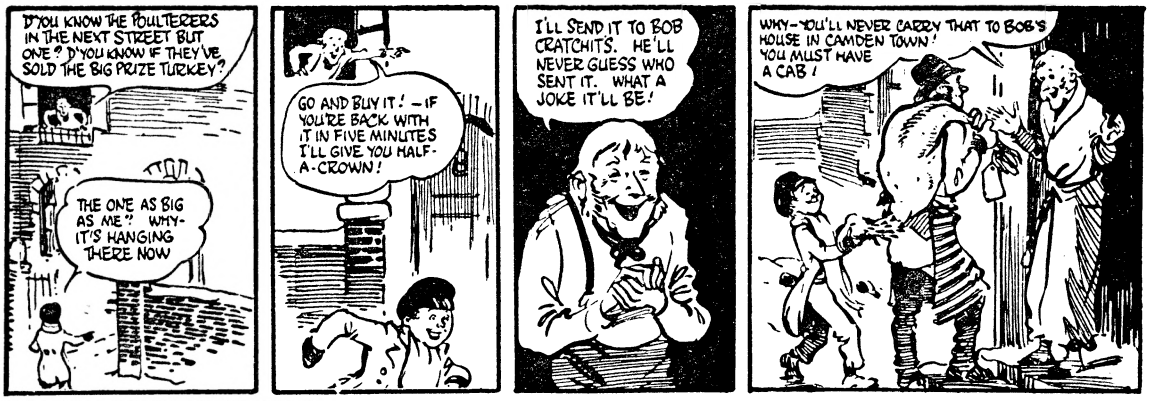
A CHILL CLUTCHED AT SCROOGE'S HEART – A CHILL WHICH GREW AS THE EXCHANGE FADED, AND HE SAW BEFORE HIM A DISMAL PLACE RAILED AROUND WITH IRON RAILINGS

NO, SPIRIT – NO! TELL ME THESE THINGS ARE ONLY SHADOWS THAT CAN BE ALTERED
In Memory of TINY TIM Beloved Son of BOB & MRS CRATCHIT


I WILL HONOUR CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART, AND TRY TO KEEP IT ALL THE YEAR. I WILL NOT FORGET WHAT THIS NIGHT HAS TAUGHT ME. TELL ME THAT I MAY WIPE AWAY THE WRITING ON THOSE STONES

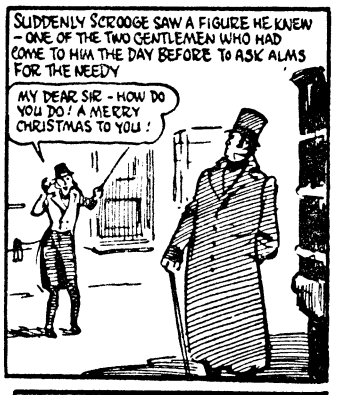
SCROOGE HELD UP HIS HANDS IN A LAST ENTREATY AND AS HE DID SO, HE SAW A CHANGE IN THE PHANTOM. IT HAD SHRUNK, DWINDLED — AND SUDDENLY IT WASN'T A PHANTOM

I DON'T KNOW WHAT DAY IT IS! I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN AMONG THE SPIRITS. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. I'M QUITE A BABY. NEVER MIND – I'D RATHER BE A BABY! HALLOO! WHOOP! HALLOO!


D'YOU KNOW THE POULTERERS IN THE NEXT STREET BUT ONE? D'YOU KNOW IF THEY'VE SOLD THE BIG PRIZE TURKEY?
THE ONE AS BIG AS ME? WHY- IT'S HANGING THERE NOW
GO AND BUY IT! - IF YOU'RE BACK WITH IT IN FIVE MINUTES I'LL GIVE YOU HALF-A-CROWN!
I'LL SEND IT TO BOB CRATCHITS. HE'LL NEVER GUESS WHO SENT IT. WHAT A JOKE IT'LL BE!
WHY-YOU'LL NEVER CARRY THAT TO BOB'S HOUSE IN CAMDEN TOWN! YOU MUST HAVE A CAB!

SCROOGE CHUCKLED AS HE PAID FOR THE TURKEY. HE CHUCKLED AS HE PAID FOR THE CAB - AND HE CHUCKLED AS HE GAVE THE LAD HIS HALF-CROWN

SCROOGE GOT OUT HIS BEST CLOTHES THAT HADN'T SEEN THE LIGHT OF DAY FOR MANY YEARS AND SALLIED FORTH TO WISH THE WORLD A MERRY CHRISTMAS!


SUDDENLY SCROOGE SAW A FIGURE HE KNEW - ONE OF THE TWO GENTLEMEN WHO HAD COME TO HIM THE DAY BEFORE TO ASK ALMS FOR THE NEEDY
MY DEAR SIR - HOW DO YOU DO! A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!

ALREADY SCROOGE WAS FEELING BETTER THAN HE HAD DONE FOR YEARS. ALL HIS ACHES AND WORRIES SEEMED TO HAVE GONE. AND SO.....

·····AND GENERALLY ENJOYED HIMSELF IMMENSELY. IN THE AFTERNOON HE TURNED HIS STEPS TOWARDS HIS NEPHEW'S HOUSE··
– AND PASSED THE DOOR A DOZEN TIMES, BEFORE HE HAD THE COURAGE TO GO UP AND KNOCK···
···BUT HE MADE A DASH, AND DID IT
I'VE COME TO SEE MY NEPHEW. I'LL GO RIGHT IN
MAY I COME IN?
WHY- UNCLE SCROOGE!
SCROOGE HAD A WON-DER-FUL TIME!
LET'S DRINK TO UNCLE SCROOGE, AND MAY HE SEE MANY ANOTHER MERRY CHRISTMAS DAY!
THE LONG HAPPY DAY CAME TO AN END AT LAST AND SCROOGE WENT HOME. BUT HE WAS EARLY AT HIS OFFICE NEXT MORNING – YOU SEE, HE HAD SET HIS HEART UPON BEING THERE BEFORE BOB CRATCHIT····

A QUARTER PAST NINE AND NO BOB! JUST WAIT UNTIL HE COMES IN.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY COMING IN HERE AT THIS TIME OF DAY?
I'M VERY SORRY, SIR. IT'S ONLY ONCE A YEAR - I PROMISE YOU IT SHALL NOT BE REPEATED.
NOW I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, MY FRIEND. I'M NOT GOING TO STAND THIS SORT OF THING ANY LONGER ....
...SO I'M GOING TO DOUBLE YOUR SALARY!
BOB WAS JUST REACHING FOR THE RULER AND WAS THINKING ABOUT SHOUTING FOR HELP. BUT THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE EARNESTNESS IN SCROOGE'S VOICE.
A MERRY CHRISTMAS, BOB - A MERRIER CHRISTMAS THAN I'VE GIVEN YOU FOR MANY A LONG DAY. WE'LL SEE ABOUT YOUR WELFARE THIS VERY DAY!
MAKE UP THE FIRES - AND GO AND BUY ANOTHER COAL SCUTTLE BEFORE YOU DOT ANOTHER i, BOB CRATCHIT!
AND IN TIME TO COME SCROOGE WAS BETTER THAN HIS WORD. HE BECAME A SECOND FATHER TO TINY TIM, WHO DID NOT DIE ....
...AND HE BECAME AS GOOD A MASTER AND A MAN AS OLD LONDON CITY EVER KNEW.....
SOME PEOPLE LAUGHED TO SEE THE CHANGE IN OLD SCROOGE - BUT HE LET THEM LAUGH. THERE WAS HAPPINESS IN HIS OWN HEART, AND THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR HIM!
THAT IS THE END OF THE STORY OF EBENEZER SCROOGE, AND OF HOW HE LEARNED THE TRUE MEANING OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.
THANK YOU MR. PRINT.
IT WAS A WONDERFUL STORY.
The End

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

DO YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE NO PENGUINS IN THE NORTH POLAR REGIONS, AND—

NO POLAR BEARS ON THE SOUTH POLAR CONTINENT?

THE GREAT IRISH DEER (NOW EXTINCT) STOOD ABOUT 10 FEET HIGH. ITS ANTLERS WERE SOME 9 FEET ACROSS.

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE COMMON EARWIG HAS WINGS BUT CANNOT FLY?

EARWIG ENLARGED.

THE COMMON "WOOLLY BEAR" IS THE CATERPILLAR OF THE TIGER MOTH, WHICH IS SO CALLED BECAUSE OF ITS BEAUTIFUL MARKINGS.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS?

WRITE DOWN ANY SUM NOT OVER £11·19·10, HAVING THE PENCE LESS THAN THE POUNDS — SAY £9·4·6.

REVERSE THE SUM AND TAKE THE LESS FROM THE GREATER THUS, £9·4·6 − £6·4·9 = £2·19·9.

ADD TO THIS RESULT THE SAME SUM REVERSED THUS. £2·19·9 + £9·19·2 = £12·18·11. AND IT ALWAYS COMES TO £12·18·11!

THE ANCESTOR OF THE ELEPHANT WAS ABOUT 3 FEET HIGH AND HAD NO TRUNK.

THE HORSE IS DESCENDED FROM A LITTLE ANIMAL ABOUT THE SIZE OF A FOX. IT HAD 4 TOES ON EACH FOREFOOT AND 3 ON EACH HIND FOOT.

DO YOU KNOW THAT, FORMERLY, THIS COUNTRY WAS COVERED BY ICE-SHEETS WHICH REACHED ALMOST AS FAR SOUTH AS THE RIVER THAMES?

GRASSHOPPERS HAVE NO VOICES. THE CHIRRUPING SOUND WHICH THEY MAKE IS CAUSED BY RUBBING THEIR LEGS ON THEIR WING-CASES.

DO YOU KNOW THAT SO-CALLED "PALM" IS MADE UP OF THE MALE CATKINS OF THE SALLOW WILLOW?

THE STEM AND LEAVES OF THE COMMON NETTLE ARE COVERED WITH HOLLOW HAIRS WHICH CONTAIN ACID. WHEN A HAIR PIERCES THE SKIN, THE POISON ENTERS THE BLOOD AND CAUSES PAIN.

PUFFINS SOMETIMES DIG BURROWS 3 OR 4 FEET LONG IN WHICH THEY LAY THEIR EGGS.

FLY'S HEAD ENLARGED.

DO YOU KNOW THAT FLIES' EYES HAVE THOUSANDS OF LENSES?

STINGING HAIR OF THE NETTLE, ENLARGED.

BILLY BUNTER — THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH

GLORIOUS WEATHER FOR THE HALF-HOLIDAY, BOYS. YOU MAY INDULGE IN A LONG WALK, CRICKET, TENNIS - OR ANY OTHER FORM OF ACTIVE, HEALTHY EXERCISE - DISMISS!
WOOPS! NOW FOR FUN!
QUELCHY SAYS I CAN INDULGE IN ANYTHING THAT'S HEALTHY-ER - COO! HERE GOES FOR A SPOT OF SNOOZE!
HOW PEACEFUL! I WILL STROLL AWHILE BEFORE TAKING MY USUAL HALF-HOLIDAY NAP -
DEAR ME! MOST DISTURBING! WHAT CAN CAUSE THAT DISCORDANT GRATING NOISE?
ZUR-RR!
BUNTER! CAN THIS BE HIS IDEA OF ACTIVE, HEALTHY EXERCISE? H'M! I MUST DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS!
ZUM-M!
THAT BOY IS DOWNRIGHT LAZY! I WILL FOREGO MY AFTERNOON SIESTA — AND TRICK BUNTER TO TAKE A LONG AND ARDUOUS WALK IN THE COUNTRY. HE IS FREE TO SPEND THE HOLIDAY AS HE WISHES - BUT TO SLEEP IT AWAY - NO! I CANNOT ALLOW THAT!

I WILL COUGH LOUD AND LONG-THEN DOUBTLESS BUNTER WILL BE MOST INTERESTED IN THE HAMPER I AM CARRYING!
ZUR!
HACK! HACK!
AR- HACK!
COO! COO! QUELCHY IS OFF FOR A LONE PICNIC! THE ARTFUL OLD DODGER! LUCKY FOR ME I OPENED ONE EYE IN TIME!
AH! MY CLEVER RUSE HAS WORKED! BUNTER'S INTEREST- AND GREED IS AROUSED! HA! HA!
TEE! HEE! I'LL TRAIL HIM UNTIL HE STOPS TO FEED - THEN - AH! HEE! HEE!
THE BOY FOLLOWS! GOOD! NOW I WILL PUT SPEED ON FOR A FEW MILES—
LATER
TUT! WHY DOESN'T THE GREEDY YOUTH OVERTAKE ME? I AM TIRING OF THIS LONG WALK!

IF I POP UP NOW - QUELCHY WILL WANT ME TO CARRY THE GRUB BASKET - BUT I'M TOO JOLLY SMART FOR THAT!
LATER STILL
PAH! I WILL GO NO FARTHER. WHY DOESN'T THE BOY SHOW HIMSELF? I AM LOSING MY PATIENCE!
BUNTER - WHERE ARE YOU?
HELP! HOW DARE YOU ENDANGER THE LIVES OF PEOPLE - YOU - YOU - ROAD HOG!
COO! QUELCHY'S DROPPED OUR GRUB!
I HAVE A GOOD MIND TO REPORT YOU TO THE POLICE! IT'S AN OUTRAGE, SIR!
QUELCHY IS TOO BUSY TO INVITE ME TO HIS FEED - SO I'LL HELP MYSELF!
STRANGE - STILL NO SIGN OF BUNTER. I CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT!

WELL, I CANNOT WAIT FOR BUNTER! AFTER MY UNNERVING EXPERIENCE I FEEL IN NEED OF A LITTLE REFRESHMENT!
MY HAMPER IS EMPTY! WHERE? WHY? HOW? OH! DEAR ME!
THE LAST CAKE - BUT QUELCHY SUPPLIED A JOLLY GOOD - MUNCH - FEED! HEE! HEE! HEE!
I CANNOT UNDERSTAND - COULD BUNTER HAVE TAKEN - TUT! I AM ANNOYED AND DISTURBED - AND NOW I MUST TRUDGE ALL THE WAY BACK TO GREYFRIARS —
TO GREYFRIARS SCHOOL 5 MILES
A MOST TIRESOME AFTERNOON! DID MY SCHEME OF EXERCISE FOR BUNTER WORK? DID THE BOY REALLY FOLLOW ME? WHO STOLE MY CAKES?
GREYFRIARS SCHOOL 2 MILES
BAH! HOW CAN I ASK - I SHALL NEVER KNOW THE TRUTH OF MY MISSING CAKES!
ZUR-R!

WHATEVER HAPPENED—
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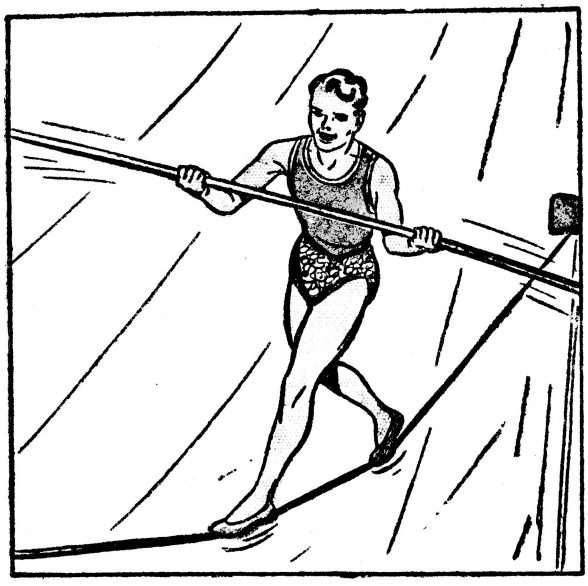
THE RIDDLE OF THE CIRCUS

A Smashing Story of Thrills Under the Big Top

By JOHN MORION



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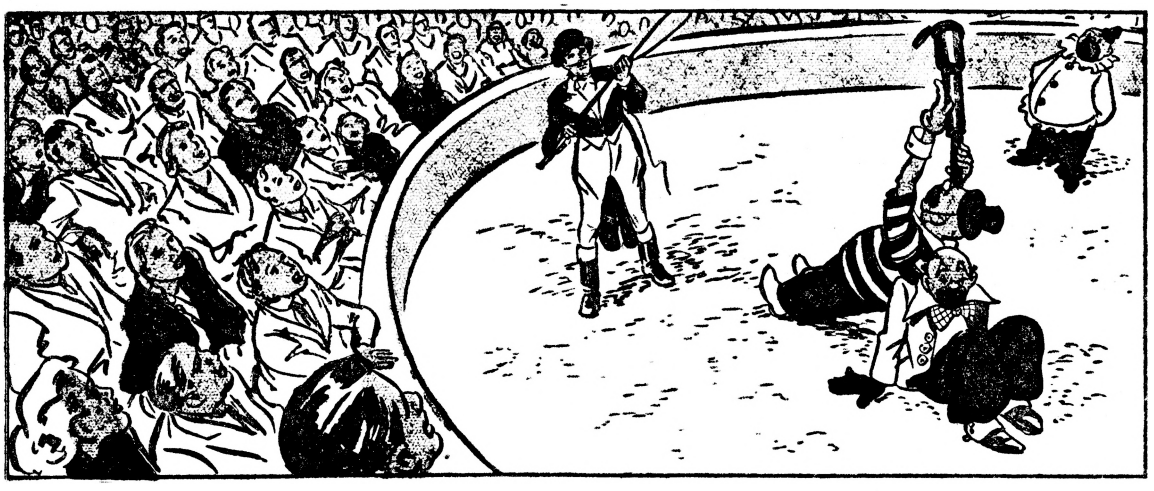

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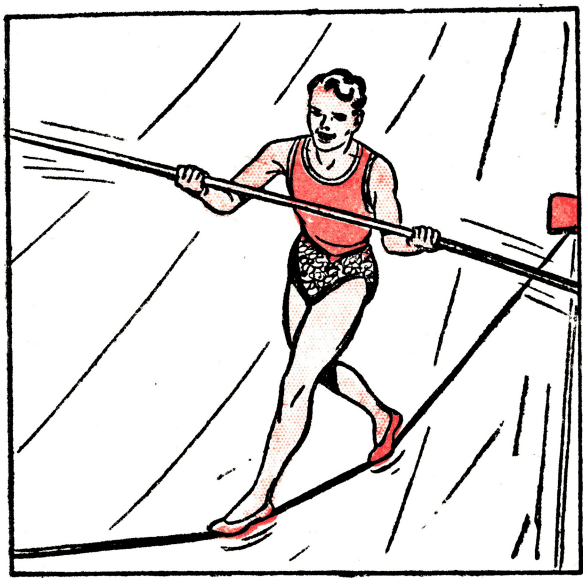

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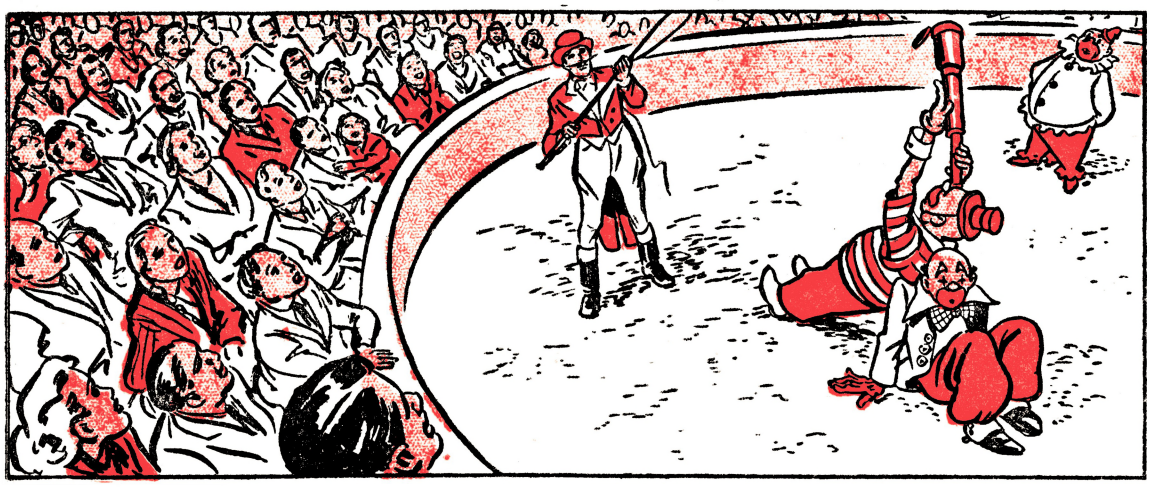

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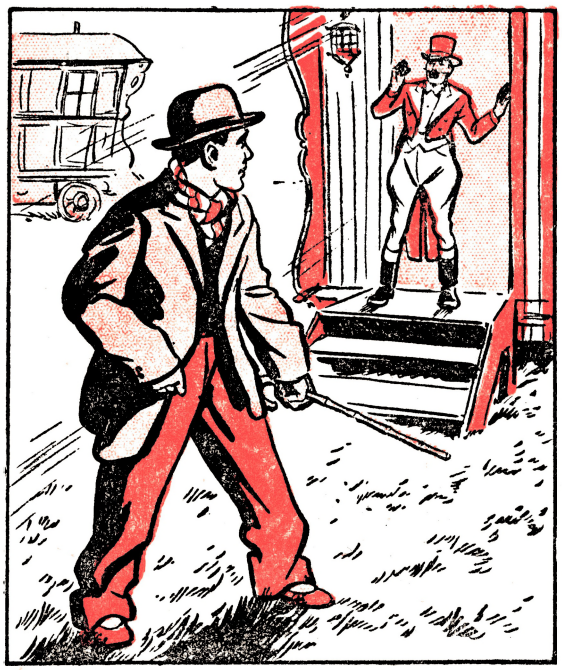

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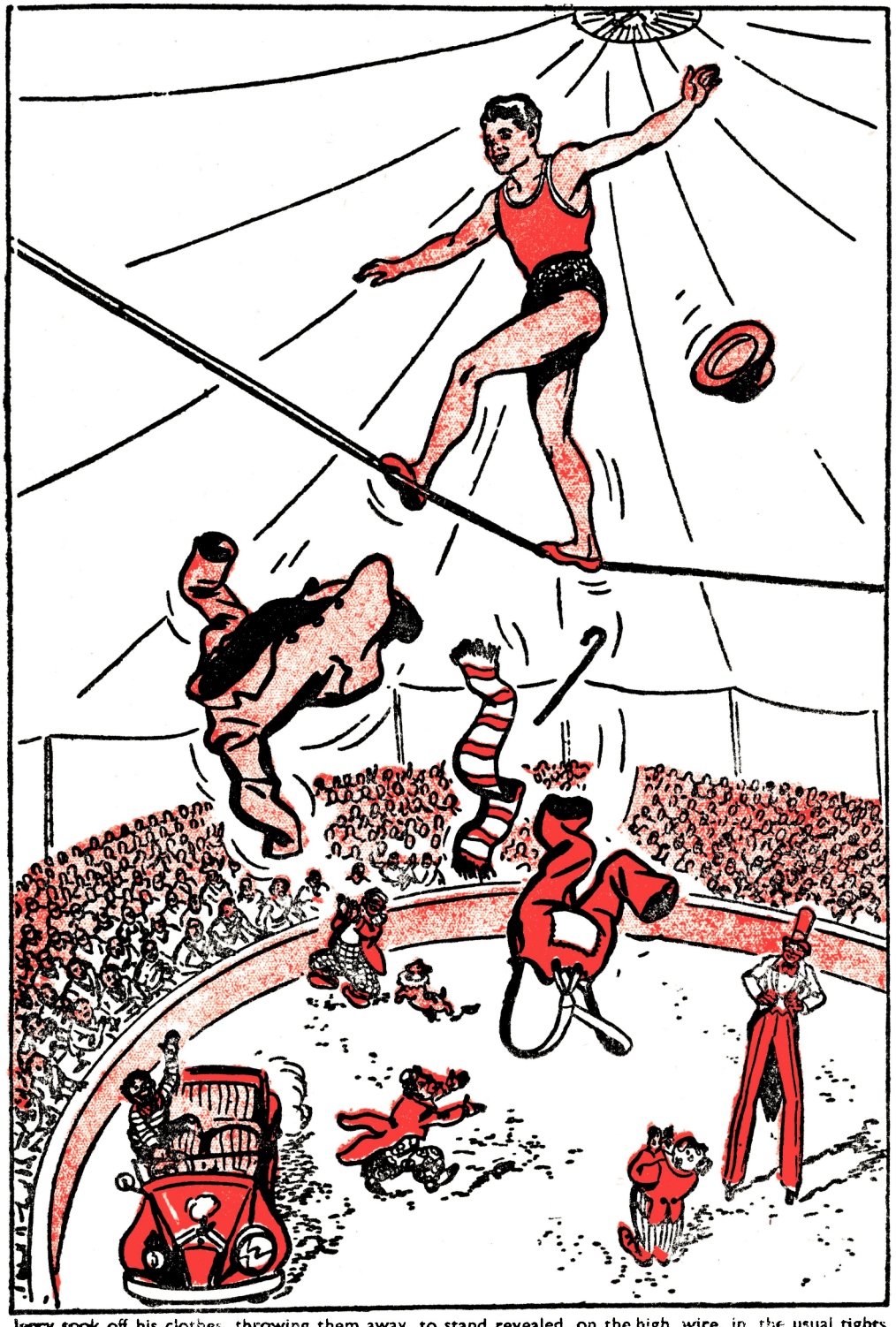


Jerry took off his clothes, throwing them away, to stand revealed, on the high wire, in the usual tights and spangles of the circus wire-walker.

THE RIDDLE OF THE CIRCUS

(*Continued from page* 36)

"Poko! There's something wrong with Jerry tonight—he's going to fall!"

As she spoke there was a shriek from the audience. Jerry had begun to totter!

As he toppled he made a quick grab for the wire, and hung on. His head was buzzing. The whole huge tent seemed to be swimming round him. He gritted his teeth as he pulled himself back on to the wire.

"He's going to try it again!" gasped Bonny. "But he mustn't. Poko, why doesn't someone stop him?"

But Jerry was already back on the wire, bowing. The audience were laughing now, convinced that he had faked the fall just to thrill them.

Jerry, true to circus tradition, was having the hoops thrown up to him. Jerry had been brought up by Pop Maxim to observe the time-honoured rule of the sawdust ring that if you failed in a trick you started again from the beginning, and got it right.

The second time Jerry went through the act without a fault, but as he descended the ladder from the wire he was looking unusually pale.

The audience was given no time to wonder whether anything was wrong.

Out through the curtains, with a mighty shriek shot the Great Vallini, a grotesque figure riding what looked like an ordinary bicycle.

But suddenly the bicycle began to play all manner of tricks. The front wheel buckled and assumed queer shapes. Vallini rode at crazy angles. The handlebars spun round. The saddle shot up and down and finally came off. The front wheel dropped off. The handlebars came off.

Vallini, wearing a look of clownish astonishment, was rocketing round the ring on the remnants of a machine which consisted of half the frame, the pedals and the back wheel.

The audience rocked with delight.

Meanwhile Bonny had pulled Jerry through the curtains and was looking at him anxiously.

"What happened?" she gasped.

"There's something very queer going on here tonight," Jerry muttered. "Pop tried to tell me about it before I came on. Then two men took a crack at me out there in the dark. They seemed to mistake me for someone else. Where's Pop now?"

"I don't know. He should be here to announce Kang's act with the Big Cats. Poko has gone to look for him."

Kang was a big man who wore splendid oriental dress when he went into the cage to do his animal-training act with a mixed troupe of tigers and pumas. He was billed in the programme as a Mongolian prince, although he had really been born in Manchester.

Kang prowled restlessly, muttering. He was a superstitious man who never liked doing his act when things weren't going

Poko clutched Jerry's arm. "Come over to Pop's hut," he said, "Something terrible has happened to Pop."

Pop was sprawled forward, face downwards across the table, and the metal cash-box lay there—open—empty.

smoothly and everything seemed to be going wrong tonight.

Vallini was finishing his act now, riding backwards on his one wheel and raising his brown bowler hat to the crowds.

Suddenly the audience shrieked. Vallini's baggy pants were coming down. The wheel wobbled as he made a grab. He zig-zagged backwards round the ring, alternately raising his hat and snatching at his slipping trousers.

Behind the curtain the clowns were lining up, ready to run riot among the audience to create a diversion while the cage was set up for Kang's act.

Vallini came streaking backwards through the curtains and the clowns rushed out, shrieking.

"Where's Pop?" demanded Kang. "Why isn't he here? A fine way to run a show."

Poko came in, his bright eyes glittering, his painted face twisted into a strange expression.

"You'll have to do your own announcement tonight," he rapped. "Pop can't make it."

"What kind of an outfit is this?" demanded Kang furiously.

Poko ignored him. He turned to Jerry and clutched his arm.

"Come over to Pop's hut," he whispered tensely. "Something terrible has happened to Pop!"

The Lost Snakes

POP had been sitting on a chair. Now he was sprawled forward on the edge of it, lying face downwards across a table.

On the table, open and empty, was a metal cashbox. Jerry stared in horror.

"Pop!" he exclaimed, starting forward.

Poko pulled him back.

"Easy," he warned. "I've sent Ma to try to find a doctor."

Jerry's startled eyes roamed the place, and his brows drew together at the sight of a single winding track on the dusty floor of the tent.

"What do you make of that?" he demanded.

Poko shook his head.

"So long as Pop is sick," said Jerry, firmly, "you'll take orders from me! Get back on the job—all of you! Keep the show going!"

"Looks as if someone dragged a rope across the floor," he declared.

At that moment there came a faint groan from Pop, and he stirred a little.

Jerry was about to go towards him when he heard footsteps. Ma was approaching, accompanied by a stranger.

"I found a doctor," said Ma. "What happened to the boss? Is he ill?"

"I can't make out what happened," Jerry declared. "He was nervous when he spoke to me before the show. He seemed to be expecting something—mind where you tread, sir. Don't disturb those marks. I've got a hunch they're important."

The doctor bent over Pop. Then he looked at Jerry and shook his head wonderingly.

"This is amazing. I'd swear he's been poisoned—"

Pop groaned, and opened his eyes.

"Easy, now," whispered the doctor. "We're taking care of you."

"My arm!" murmured Pop. "I was coming in here when something seemed to sting my arm. It was dark. I couldn't see—"

His voice trailed away again. He had fallen unconscious once more.

The doctor pulled up Pop's sleeve. Poko caught his breath.

"It looks as if he's been bitten!" he exclaimed.

"Bitten!" echoed Jerry in sharp surprise. "Wait a minute. You may be on to something. That trail on the floor. You said it looked as if someone had dragged a rope along. It could have been made by a snake!"

"But we've got no snakes in the show!" protested Poko.

"What about the sideshows?" Jerry reminded him. "There's the Fakir of Siggadore, the snake-charmer. The reptiles he uses for the act are billed as deadly poisonous!"

"One of them must have escaped!" gasped Poko.

"It's an idea," admitted Jerry. "But wait a minute. Early this evening that cash box was full of money. Now it's empty. A snake could have bitten Pop, but it couldn't have carried off money out of the cash box!"

Poko whistled softly.

"That's right," he agreed. "Gosh, this gets more and more of a mystery every minute."

Jerry turned anxiously to the doctor.

"Just how bad is Pop?" he demanded.

"Difficult to say. It's going to be a long time before he's in a fit state to answer questions. He's going to need careful looking after."

"I'll have him moved to my caravan," Jerry decided.

Instinctively, Jerry found himself taking charge. With Pop out of action as a result of this mysterious attack it was up to Jerry to take over, to keep things going, to find out what was at the back of the strange and sinister happenings.

When he came out of his caravan a crowd of anxious circus performers had gathered. Bonny was there, Vallini, Kang and a dozen others.

"What are you doing here?" Jerry demanded angrily. "Why aren't you getting ready for the final parade?"

"Ma told us——" Kang began.

"That Pop's met with trouble? But that's no reason for leaving the tent."

"But look here, Jerry——"

"So long as Pop is sick you'll take your orders from me," Jerry retorted firmly. "Get back on the job, all of you. Keep the show going."

Kang, who was a hot-tempered man, and who resented being told what to do by a youngster like Jerry, hesitated rebelliously for a moment. Then he turned on his heel, muttering, and followed the others.

Jerry made his way quickly past the Big Top towards the surrounding fairground side-shows which accompanied the circus.

The side-shows were quiet. Only a handful of people were strolling round. Business wouldn't warm up until the circus had ended.

Jerry paused outside a booth which displayed a highly coloured picture of an Indian playing a flute to a basket of snakes.

He hesitated for a moment before going in.

A nut-brown little man, wearing a turban, was bending over a large wicker basket.

"Come in," he said. "Don't be scared. Snakes all safe in basket."

"Are you sure they're all in there?" demanded Jerry. "Are you sure you haven't lost any?"

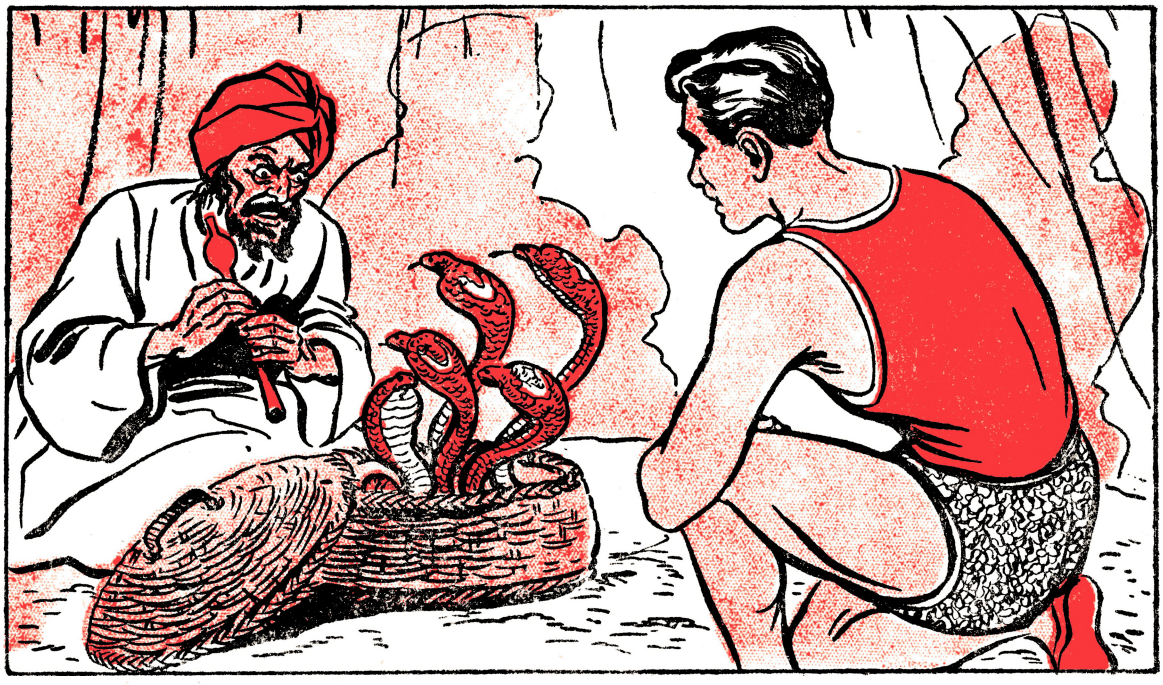
The snake-charmer gave him a puzzled stare.

"Something wrong?" he demanded.

"Is it possible for those things to get out of the basket to escape?" insisted Jerry.

"Not possible," the snake-charmer insisted firmly.

"Just to make sure," begged Jerry.



The snake-charmer uttered a horrified cry. "One gone! It is impossible—yet, one missing!"

" You seem to know so much about it," cried Kang, levelling an accusing finger at Jerry. " I think you did it ! I think you stole the money ! "

The snake-charmer drew a wooden skewer from the top of the basket, and lifted the lid. He peered inside. He made squeaking noises through his reed pipe at his pets, then up came the swaying heads of the wriggling snakes, and the sight of their forked tongues made Jerry shiver.

Suddenly the snake charmer uttered a horrified cry.

" One gone ! " he cried. " It is impossible, yet—one missing ! "

Jerry caught his breath.

" Could anyone have taken it ? Has anyone been prowling round here ? " he asked.

" Lotsa people come to see my act," the snake-charmer pointed out. " But mostly they too scared to come very close."

" I mean anyone from the show," Jerry insisted. " Or has anyone been asking questions about the snakes."

" Sure. Lotsa people ask how I handle them without getting bitten. Poko asks me only to-day. And Miss Bonny, too."

" Bonny ! " cried Jerry. " She couldn't possibly have had anything to do with it. Anyone else ? "

" Kang ! "

" What did he want to know ? " demanded Jerry.

" He ask, if anybody get bitten by snake, would he die."

" Did he indeed ! " Jerry exclaimed thoughtfully.

Jerry went back to the circus tent. The show was over. The crowds were streaming out. Most of the performers were gathered in an anxious group in the ring.

" What have you found out, Jerry ? " Bonny asked eagerly.

" One of the snakes has disappeared, " Jerry reported. " It must have crawled into the tent and bitten Pop. Someone who saw that he had been knocked out by the bite took the chance to steal what was in the cash box."

" Oh, no ! " protested Bonny. " Surely no one here would do such a thing, even on the spur of the moment."

" Someone needed money in a hurry," Jerry insisted. " And I'm not even sure that it was done on the spur of the moment. It appears to be impossible for a snake to escape

from the basket. I think someone stole it and planted it deliberately in Pop's tent."

"Just who is this someone supposed to be?" demanded Kang, the animal trainer, grimly.

"Someone in the show. Someone I was mistaken for when I was attacked tonight. I've got to find out who it was. I've got to find out what became of the money."

Poko, the clown, suddenly frowned.

"That reminds me. Tonight is our pay night," he declared.

"That's how there happened to be so much money in the cash box" nodded Jerry.

"You mean to say we don't get paid now? Our money is gone? The circus is broke?" cried Poko.

Kang uttered a snarl that might have come from the throat of one of his animals.

"We're being swindled. This whole thing smells," he declared angrily. "I'm going to talk to Pop and get the truth if I have to beat it out of him."

Jerry grabbed his arm and held him in a steely grip.

"Stay away from that caravan," he warned grimly. "Pop's condition is dangerous, any disturbance now might be fatal!"

Bonny began to edge away.

"I think I'll go and see how he is," she said softly. "He may need something."

Kang pulled himself roughly from Jerry's bruising grip.

"All right. You're the boss now. Tell us how we're going to get paid," he snapped. "I'm not working here for nothing."

"Give me a chance," rapped Jerry angrily. "I'm trying to find out which of you has got the money. I want to know first of all exactly where you all were during the show tonight, which of you left the tent after I last spoke to Pop, and where you went."

"So you're accusing one of us, eh?" snarled Kang. "Very clever!"

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Jerry.

Jerry and the police burst into the Fakir's tent. "Anyone at home?" cried Jerry. Then he stopped, and gasped.

"You seem to know so much about it, and are so anxious to push the blame on someone else, I think you did it," accused Kang harshly. "I think you stole the money."

The others all gasped in shocked surprise.

"No!" protested Poko. "Not Jerry!"

"And why not?" demanded the animal trainer. "He had the best chance. So far as we know he was the last of us to see Pop. And we've only his word for it that he was attacked by someone."

They were all staring at Jerry now with dawning suspicions, the Kuban Cossacks, the Colossal Carmarnos, the Clowns, Ma, Vallini, the crazy cyclist, and even Poko.

"There's something in what he says," murmured the clown unhappily.

"Of course there is," snarled Kang. "You all saw how upset and unnerved he was in the show tonight. You all saw how he nearly ruined his act when he slipped on the wire. What made him so unsteady?"

"I've already explained——" Jerry began.

"Explained?" sneered the animal trainer. "You've just tried to shift the blame on to

From the tent where the horses were stalled came pandemonium. Jerry and the police turned and ran!

one of us, that's all. I think it's just about time you called the police."

At that Ma's dark eyes flashed angrily.

"The police?" she echoed fiercely. "We don't want the police here. We circus folk always settle our own troubles in our own way."

At that moment Bonny came back. She caught Jerry's arm.

"The Fakir wants to talk to you, Jerry," she said tensely. "He says it's very important. He wouldn't tell me what it was, but it's something to do with the snakes."

"I'll see him in about ten minutes," Jerry promised. "Kang is right. It's time I called the police."

It was a little more than ten minutes later when the police car arrived. The local inspector himself had come in response to Jerry's message.

Jerry explained as much as he knew of the strange happenings of the evening, and then led the way to the snake-charmer's booth.

"He said he had something important to tell me," Jerry explained. "I thought I'd better wait and let you hear it, too."

As they approached the booth Jerry felt a sudden sense of uneasiness. Most of the sideshows were going full swing now, and doing brisk business. The Fakir should have been squatting outside the booth and playing on his flute to attract patrons. Instead the place had an air of being shut-up and lifeless. A few people loitered to look at the posters, but there were no signs that a show was to begin.

Jerry pushed aside the curtained flap at the entry.

"Anyone at home?" he called.

Then he stopped, and gasped. The snake-charmer was sprawling face downwards on the ground.

The inspector thrust swiftly past Jerry, and dropped to one knee. Then he jerked up his head. His face was grim.

"He's badly hurt," he snapped. "Attacked from behind—and it must have happened within the last few minutes!"

Then he was rapping out orders and the Fakir was taken away to hospital.

The Clue

FOR some little time Jerry felt stunned and speechless. He glanced round the tent. He suddenly saw that the wicker basket was open and empty.

"The snakes have gone!" he exclaimed. "The Fakir had something to tell about the snakes that would have helped to clear up this mystery. Everyone heard Bonny say so. Almost anyone could have done this. We must find out exactly what all our circus folk were doing with themselves during the last ten minutes because one—the guilty one—came here and——"

"You don't have to teach me my job, young man," the inspector said curtly. "That's exactly what I propose to do. I'm going to have to question everyone. I may as well start with you. What were you doing between the time that Miss Bonny told you that the snake-charmer knew something and the moment when I arrived here."

" I hurried to the nearest telephone to call you," said Jerry, " and then—gosh ! You don't think I attacked him, do you ? "

" You had as much chance as anyone else," the inspector answered grimly. " Tell me something. Am I right in thinking that if Maxim had died from the effect of that snakebite the circus would have belonged to you ? "

" Why yes, that's true," admitted Jerry.

Then he stopped, a horrified expression on his face, as he began to see where the inspector's questions were leading.

But before he could say anything more there came a sudden terrifying interruption.

From the direction of the enclosure where the circus horses were stalled came shrill screams, neighings, stamping, shouting and kicking.

It was a sound that struck a chill of horror to Jerry's blood, a sound to bring fear to any experienced circus hand, the sound of animals getting out of hand, stampeding in terror and panic.

No greater calamity could strike a circus than to have the performing animals get out of control.

Then came Bonny's voice.

" Jerry ! Jerry ! Help ! "

" Come on ! " yelled Jerry.

Pandemonium had broken out among the highly-strung, terrified horses. They were plunging, screaming, rearing, kicking. Wooden partitions had been smashed to splinters.

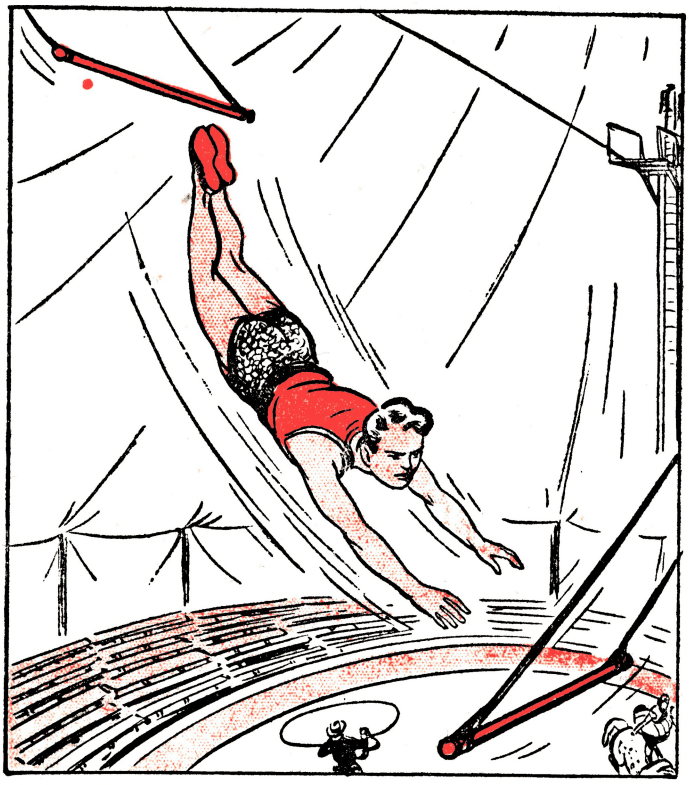
Jerry saw Bonny lifted off her feet as, clinging to the head of one of the horses she rode in the show, it reared back in maddened terror.

Jerry rushed to her aid.

" All right. Let go. I've got him," he shouted, as he dodged in among flying hooves.

Crash ! Crash !

The horses were plunging, screaming, rearing, kicking. Jerry dodged in among the flying hooves. Others came dashing in to help.



From his high perch Jerry saw, in the ring below, the same snake-like trail that he had seen in his Pop's caravan. Woooosh ! He plunged through the air to a lower trapeze !

Splintered boards were flying past his head. Others came dashing in to help.

" Get them outside. Bring blankets. There's something in here that's driving them crazy ! " shouted Jerry.

Blankets were flung over the horses' heads. This had the effect of quietening them a little, but they were still bucking and twisting as they were led away from their stalls to another part of the field.

Jerry went back to examine the wreckage. What had caused the sudden outbreak of panic among the horses ?

He kicked about among the straw and splintered wood. Then he caught sight of something that caused him to drop to his knees.

" Look ! " he exclaimed. " One of the snakes. We'll find the others here somewhere."

He examined the snake carefully. The head had been battered almost shapeless. His eyes narrowed thoughtfully.

" Whoever planted these snakes in here wanted us to think that they had escaped on their own and were trampled by the horses. Actually they had been killed and battered before they were flung in here, to conceal something vitally important."

" What was that ? " Bonny asked breathlessly.

" These snakes were harmless," Jerry declared. " The poison fangs have been removed. The Fakir's snake-charming act was a phoney. That's the secret that he wanted to admit to me."

" You must be mistaken," protested Bonny. " We all know that Pop was bitten——"

" He wasn't bitten," insisted Jerry. " We've been deliberately misled by someone who wanted to put us off the scent."

Bonny looked at him in bewilderment.

" But Jerry, what about that trail on the floor of Pop's tent ? If it wasn't caused by a crawling snake what kind of thing did make it ? " she asked with a shudder.

Jerry shook his head helplessly.

" If we knew the answer to that we'd be able to solve the whole problem, " he declared.

The Trail

THE following morning Jerry was practising on the high wire. The big ring below him was a whirl of movement. Directly beneath him acrobats were performing mad tricks with a table and two chairs.

On the far side Poko and the clowns were trying out a new routine with buckets of whitewash. Bonny was trotting two horses round the outer edge of the ring as she stood upright with one foot on the back of each. Vallini, on his one-wheeled cycle, was weaving in and out of the other groups with a masterly skill.

The circus performers never eased up. In between shows they practised, practised all the time. They couldn't afford to slack off, to lose control of the split-second timing that made all the difference between a trick

perfectly done and a slip that might bring a broken limb.

Despite the tragedies that had struck the circus they still kept going as if nothing had happened.

The police had gone away, after taking statements from everyone. They were no nearer finding a solution to the mystery.

Jerry, juggling hoops on the high wire, glanced down at the busy pattern of movement below him.

Suddenly he saw something which so startled him that it almost made him lose his balance.

There in the sawdust was a winding, snake-like track which exactly matched the mysterious track which Jerry had seen on the floor of Pop's tent.

How had it got there? What had made it?

The truth suddenly struck Jerry like a blinding light. "Vallini!"

The track had been made by his one-wheeled cycle! And the baggy costume Vallini wore in the ring was near enough to the one Jerry wore when he made his entrance for anyone to make the simple mistake of taking Jerry for Vallini in the dark!

At that moment Vallini seemed to become aware that Jerry was watching him. He looked up. The expression he saw on Jerry's face must have told him that his guilty secret was out.

He suddenly spun his crazy cycle round and raced like mad for the exit.

"Stop him!" yelled Jerry.

No one heard him. The sound of Bonny's horses drowned his shout.

Jerry ran recklessly along the wire. Reaching the end of the high platform he jumped recklessly, and came down with both hands on a trapeze that dangled from the roof.

The force of his plunge sent the trapeze swinging. It carried Jerry half-way across the big tent to another, lower one. Again he swished through the air. Wococcoosh!

Jerry let go his hold. There were screams from Bonny when she saw him plunging through the air.

Vallini looked wildly over his shoulder. Then Jerry crashed down on him, and they both thudded into the sawdust.

There was a rush of performers from all sides as Jerry struggled to hold Vallini down.

"Help me!" panted Jerry. "Call the police. Vallini is the man they want!"

It was Vallini practising on his comic bike! And that trail in the sawdust meant that it was Vallini who had attacked Pop and stolen the money!

Vallini's struggles were useless. He had been bowled out.

Later, when the police arrived and searched his caravan they found not only the stolen money but a hypodermic needle still containing traces of poison.

Vallini, it transpired, had been mixed up in many crooked deals without having been found out. Two crooks who knew his secret had tried to blackmail him. Desperate for money, Vallini had planned to rob the circus.

Arming himself with the poison needle he had ridden into Pop's hut on his trick wheel. He was so skilled at riding that he didn't need to dismount, and so had left no footprints.

Pop had entered, in the dark, while Vallini was breaking open the cash box, and Vallini had used the needle on him.

When it was all over Jerry went to his caravan, where Pop was now slowly recovering, nursed by Bonny.

Pop was still weak and wasn't being allowed many visitors yet, but there was a gentle knock on the door and Kang came in looking for once by no means fierce.

"He is going to get better?" asked the animal trainer eagerly.

"He'll soon be his old self and running an even bigger and better show than ever," Jerry declared with a grin.

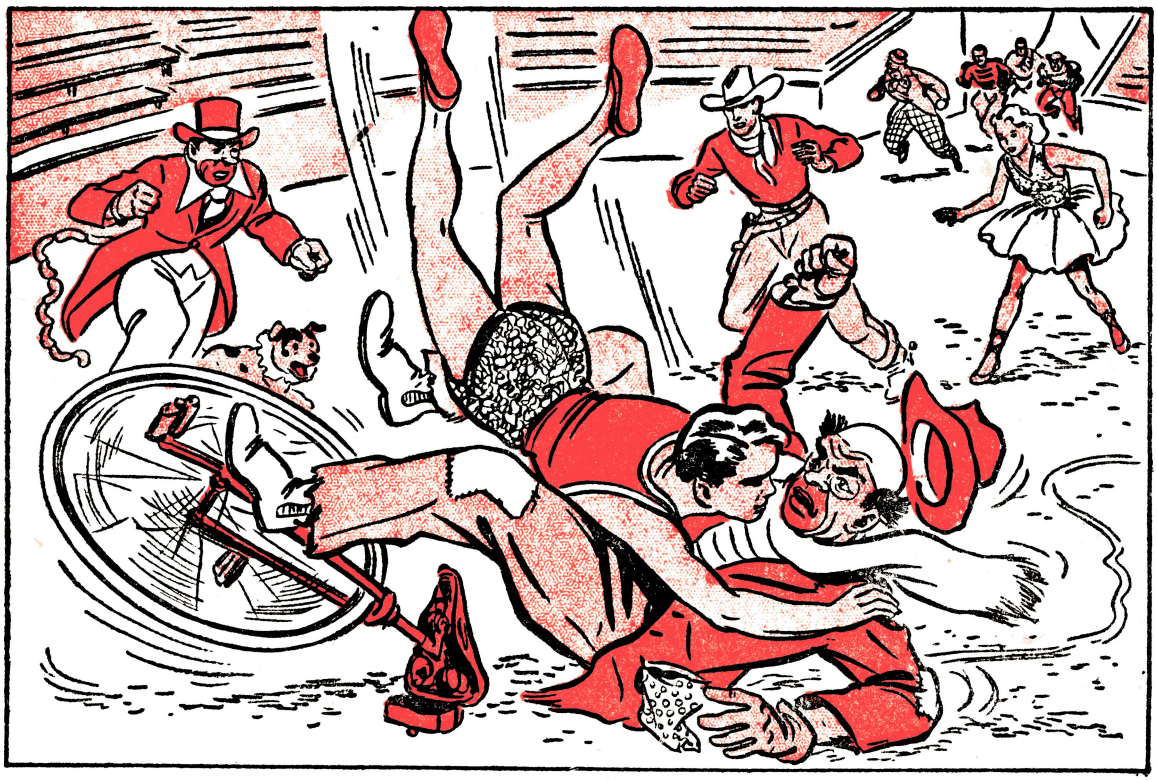
"I'm glad," nodded Kang. "Jerry, lad, I owe you an apology. I thought you were the guilty one."

Jerry grinned and held out his hand.

"That makes us quits," he chuckled. "You were so anxious to put the blame on me that until I spotted those tracks in the sawdust I was convinced that you were the culprit."

"It couldn't possibly have been me, because whoever did it had to open the Fakir's basket. Shall I tell you a secret?" asked the animal trainer, lowering his voice. "I don't mind handling lions and tigers—but I'm terrified to death of snakes!"

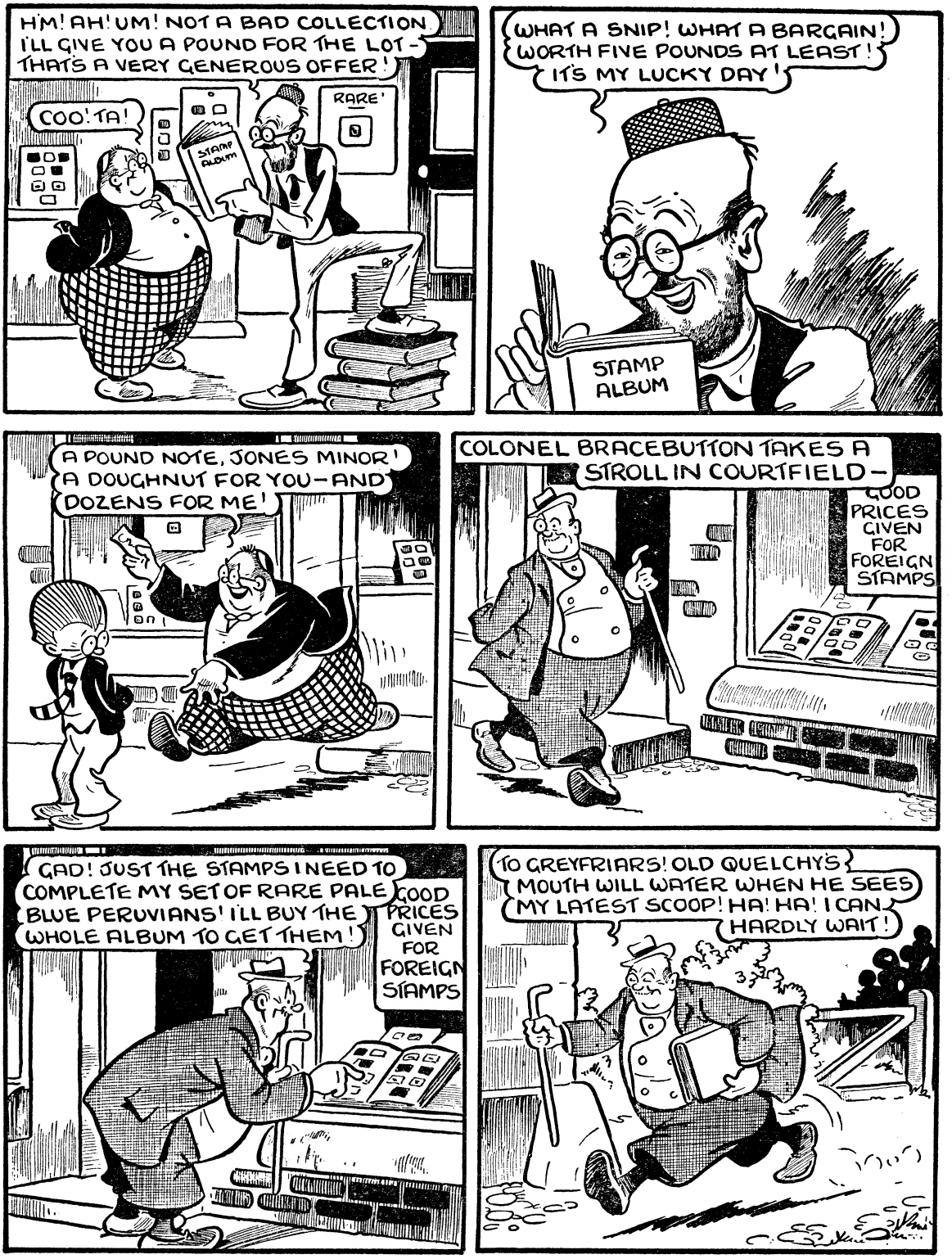
THE END

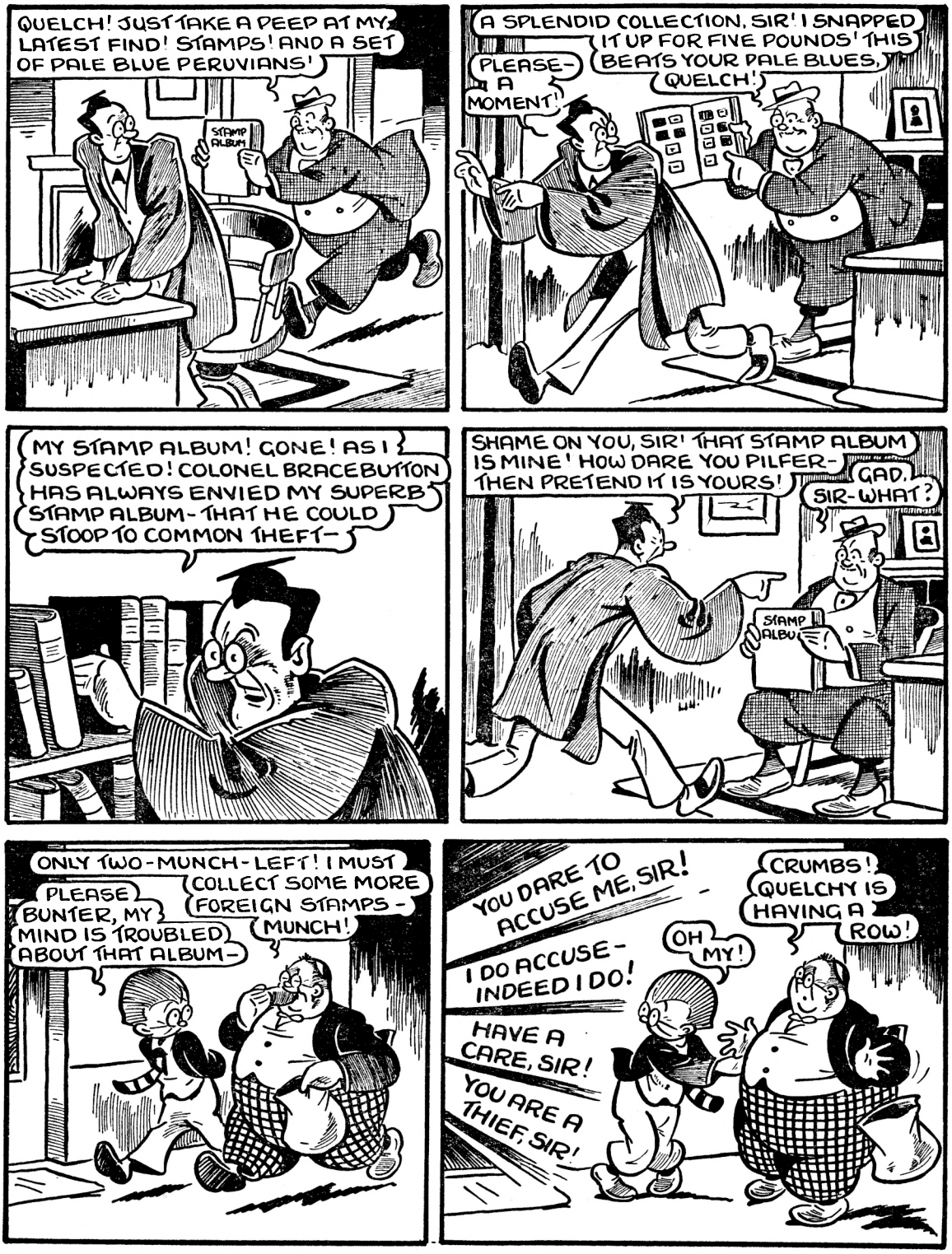


Vallini realised Jerry had found him out and tried to get away, but he was too late! Jerry crashed down on him and they both thudded to the sawdust.

BILLY BUNTER THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH

COO! I WISH I HAD SOME FOREIGN STAMPS TO SELL. JONES MINOR. HAVE YOU GOT ANY TO GIVE ME?
PLEASE BUNTER- NO!
GOOD PRICES GIVEN FOR FOREIGN STAMPS
YOU'RE A SILLY CHUMP NOT TO HAVE A LOT OF FOREIGN STAMPS! WE COULD HAVE SOLD 'EM AND BOUGHT A JOLLY GOOD FEED!
I MUST BE A SILLY CHUMP, TOO! I KNOW HOW TO GET HUNDREDS OF FOREIGN STAMPS! TEE! HEE! IT'S EASY!
LATER
H. QUELCH
I'VE FOUND A BOOK FULL OF FOREIGN STAMPS - AND THEY'VE ALL BEEN USED - SO QUELCHY CAN'T GRUMBLE!
I'LL BET I CAN SELL ALL THESE FOREIGN STAMPS FOR POUNDS AND POUNDS! I'VE-ER- JUST FOUND 'EM!
OH, BUNTER- MAY I ASK WHERE?
TEE! HEE! I'LL SOON BE EATING DOZENS OF DOUGHNUTS - AND THERE'LL BE ONE FOR YOU!
PLEASE BUNTER- WHERE DID YOU GET THAT ALBUM?


HM! AH! UM! NOT A BAD COLLECTION I'LL GIVE YOU A POUND FOR THE LOT - THAT'S A VERY GENEROUS OFFER!
COO! TA!
STAMP ALBUM
RARE!
WHAT A SNIP! WHAT A BARGAIN! WORTH FIVE POUNDS AT LEAST! IT'S MY LUCKY DAY!
STAMP ALBUM
A POUND NOTE, JONES MINOR! A DOUGHNUT FOR YOU - AND DOZENS FOR ME!
COLONEL BRACEBUTTON TAKES A STROLL IN COURTFIELD -
GOOD PRICES GIVEN FOR FOREIGN STAMPS
GAD! JUST THE STAMPS I NEED TO COMPLETE MY SET OF RARE PALE BLUE PERUVIANS! I'LL BUY THE WHOLE ALBUM TO GET THEM!
GOOD PRICES GIVEN FOR FOREIGN STAMPS
TO GREYFRIARS! OLD QUELCHY'S MOUTH WILL WATER WHEN HE SEES MY LATEST SCOOP! HA! HA! I CAN HARDLY WAIT!


QUELCH! JUST TAKE A PEEP AT MY LATEST FIND! STAMPS! AND A SET OF PALE BLUE PERUVIANS!
STAMP ALBUM
A SPLENDID COLLECTION, SIR! I SNAPPED IT UP FOR FIVE POUNDS! THIS BEATS YOUR PALE BLUES, QUELCH!
PLEASE- A MOMENT!
MY STAMP ALBUM! GONE! AS I SUSPECTED! COLONEL BRACEBUTTON HAS ALWAYS ENVIED MY SUPERB STAMP ALBUM- THAT HE COULD STOOP TO COMMON THEFT-
SHAME ON YOU, SIR! THAT STAMP ALBUM IS MINE! HOW DARE YOU PILFER- THEN PRETEND IT IS YOURS!
GAD, SIR- WHAT?
STAMP ALBU
ONLY TWO-MUNCH-LEFT! I MUST COLLECT SOME MORE FOREIGN STAMPS - MUNCH!
PLEASE BUNTER, MY MIND IS TROUBLED ABOUT THAT ALBUM-
YOU DARE TO ACCUSE ME, SIR!
I DO ACCUSE- INDEED I DO!
HAVE A CARE, SIR!
YOU ARE A THIEF, SIR!
OH MY!
CRUMBS! QUELCHY IS HAVING A ROW!

I BOUGHT THE ALBUM FROM A MAN WHO BOUGHT IT FROM A FAT BOY!
O CORKS!
OWN UP, BUNTER!
BOUGHT FROM A FAT BOY – BUNTER!
WE MUST FIND BUNTER, COLONEL-
OW! THE ROTTER'S BLAMING ME! I'M OFF!
NOT IF I KNOW IT!
AH!
OH! WELL DONE, JONES MINOR! NOW, BUNTER!
OWCH!
YOU SHALL PAY FOR YOUR MISDEEDS, MISERABLE YOUTH. COME WITH ME!
OW! I DIDN'T SELL- I MEAN- IT MUST HAVE BEEN - THAT IS-
THAT WILL BE YOUR DAILY TASK FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, BUNTER!
GOOD PRICES
CHEATS NEVER PROSPER, BUNTER!

When Wilson whipped out his gun, it was the fastest thing that ever was seen!

JOHNNY'S BAD BARGAIN

A Rip-Roaring Western Yarn

By LEWIS WHYATT

The Mistake

JOHNNY DANVERS was madder than a bee-stung bear—and all on account of the five broncs he had just herded into a special pole corral the boys had set up well away from the main Double D ranch buildings.

Trouble was that Johnny knew full well that he'd only himself to blame for sealing a real bad bargain—he who claimed to know all there was to learn about horses, too!

The gent who had come along the trail from Three Springs, heading west, driving the string ahead of him, didn't seem to have had any intention of stopping at the Double D.

Johnny had met him at the trail fork, passed the time of day, eyed the bunch of broncs and then offered the gent the hospitality of his home.

Neither had this gent seemed eager to sell when it came down to cases.

Johnny needed to increase his string; the bunch that he ran now was kind of overworked at times; five new horses would form a useful addition—so Johnny decided that he could save himself a trip to town by doing a deal right here on the spot.

There was nothing wrong with the gent; he was able to prove that he had come by the horses honestly. Neither did he attempt to drive a hard bargain. Johnny just made an offer and the horses changed hands.

Even then Johnny didn't spot anything wrong—in fact, it wasn't until five days later, with the easy-going gent a hundred miles or so 'way east, that Johnny discovered he'd bought himself as fine a string of fakes as ever was unloaded on any young and trustful ranchman.

Now, your faked horse comes in several different ways. One thing only is common to them—they all *look* good.

You may be an expert on horse-flesh—but you don't know your fake till you ride him. Then it all comes out—like the dirt in one of them new-fangled washing machines. Your fake may be wind-broken, cracking up after a mere dozen miles of hard riding. He may have a tendency to fall lame within a mile of leaving pasture; maybe he has an oversized heart or a busted lung. You never can tell until you've tried to ride him all out. Then, as sure as eggs, you know you've got yourself a fake.

And Johnny Danvers had bought five in a row! No wonder he was madder than a wet hen as he drove them into this special corral where they'd never mix with the ranch string and so get picked for work that they just naturally couldn't do.

There was going to be some chaffing from the boys about this, too. Lanky Weston, the ranch foreman, wouldn't *say* much—but he'd make that show of hiding a superior smile behind his horny right hand just any time anybody should mention horses.

His mother, alone of all the ranch occupants would keep her own counsel. She might think a lot—but she wouldn't crib. His mother thought the world of him; never questioned his decisions; was always content to sit back and let him run the Double D as his father had done before him.

Johnny slammed the corral gate-bar into position and glared at the horses.

"Some time, some place I'll get rid of you," he muttered, shaking his fist at the bunch. "Bah! You——you bunch o' ornery crowbait, you!"

Breakfast was ready when he returned to the ranch-house. His mother set a steaming plate of beans and bacon before him and then reached for the coffee-pot.

Johnny scowled at his food. "Ding-bust all horse-dealers!" he snapped, jabbing his fork at a harmless piece of bacon. "If ever a slab-sided son of——"

"Johnny Danvers!" cut in his mother. "Will you quit squalling over something you did yourself! You got the tough end of a bad bargain. Let it go at that. Goodness, son! You just can't go through life expecting to get your own way *all* the time. You've been bested in a deal over horses. So what? Many as good a ranchman as you are has made far worse deals. Just forget it. You didn't know all the facts—that's all there is to it. You don't have to go up and act like a bear with a sore head—just because you didn't know all the facts."

Johhny chewed in silence for a moment. Then slowly the frown lifted from his freckled face and presently he grinned.

"Aw, well Ma—guess you're right," he said. "So long as the fellers don't rib me, guess I'll try to forget it."

"They won't son," said Mrs. Danvers. "After all—you're the boss now."

"Yeah—that's right! I'm the boss," said Johnny—and resolved to prove it if any of the waddies got cheeky.

Lanky Weston came in to report then. Johnny looked at him for signs of merriment but Lanky was all business.

"We've cut out a hundred head of them shorthorn heifers, Johnny," the foreman said.

"You wish for 'em to be druv to town for shipment? You said to have 'em ready early this month."

"Yeah, Lanky," said Johnny, with a nod. "Guess you'd better cover the job yourself, too. Take Slick and Curly along—the boys need a break. Stay in town a coupla days if you want."

That was a bright afterthought. With ninety-nine per cent. of his staff on leave the matter of the fakes could not come to the fore—and a couple of days in town would go a long way to make them forget their boss' mistake.

"It's an idea, Johnny," said Lanky,

heartily. " I could make out with just one of the boys if you'd rather."

" Shucks—there ain't going to be much to do for a coupla days," persisted Johnny. " The rest of the herd is on the home range and they won't go very far from the pasture we got close home. You get along. Have a good time. I'll expect yuh back end o' the week."

So Lanky left in something of a hurry to trail-drive the small herd the forty-odd miles into Three Springs and Johnny busied himself about the cares and duties which a small spread like the Double D always imposes upon its owner.

Misunderstood

ALONG around mid-morning a couple of days later Johnny spotted a cloud of dust swirling up from the hoofs of a hard-driven horse way down the trail from Three Springs. A frown creased his sunny features at the sight.

" Someone burnin' up the trail from town, Ma," he called from the ranch-house veranda into the kitchen where Mrs. Danvers was busily engaged on her daily chores. " If it's one of our boys that sure spells trouble to me."

By the time his mother had wiped the flour from her hands and joined Johnny on the steps the horseman was considerably nearer.

" Ain't one of our hosses," said Johnny, suddenly. " It's a stranger, Ma. Our boys would have short-cut across the ford. This feller don't know the trail that way."

He strode down the steps towards the five-barred gate that gave entrance to his holding. Mrs. Danvers shrugged her shoulders and went back to her baking.

The stranger reined in, slithering to a dust-disturbing halt. Johnny eyed him quickly. Young, clean-cut, a-sweat as much as was his horse. Jutting jaw and eyes that held a steely light that was a little disturbing. Johnny's eyes lingered for a moment on the guns at the stranger's hips. Pity he hadn't strapped on his own holsters—but that hadn't been necessary around the Double D for many a year now.

"Lookin' for anyone in particular, stranger?" Johhny asked in non-committal tones.

For answer the stranger swung off his horse and faced the young boss of the Double D.

" I could use a square meal, Mr. Danvers," he said civilly. " And maybe a cup or two of coffee."

" You know my name," Johnny said casually. " Should I know you? We met some place? "

The stranger shook his head.

" Heard in Three Springs that the boss of the Double D was a young man name of Danvers," he said. " This is the Double D—guess you must be Danvers. My name's Wilson."

" Yuh done some hard ridin' lately, Mr. Wilson," said Johnny slowly. " Turn your cayuse into the corral. I'll have him fed and watered while you eat. Anything stirrin' in Three Springs these days? "

" Nice place you got here," said Wilson, pointedly ignoring Johnny's question.

The Double D boss lead the way to the pump and the newcomer washed up, quickly, looking all the better for it.

" Oh, Ma," called Johnny as they entered the ranch kitchen together. " Waddy here cravin' a meal. Anythin' left from breakfast? "

Mrs. Danvers looked at the newcomer shrewdly. Then a smile of welcome broke across her pleasant face and she pointed to a chair. As Wilson moved towards it a huge wolf-hound rose from the patchwork rug in front of the open range and came slowly forward, ear a-cock.

" Set yourself down, young man," said Mrs. Danvers. " I'll soon rustle up something. Down, Ajax—down, boy! "

Ajax, the ranch-house guard-dog, didn't normally cotton to strangers. This time, however, he sniffed at Wilson's outstretched hand, wagged his tail a couple of times and then licked the hand before returning to his rug.

" Kinda likes you, I guess," said Johnny. " I'll go tend your horse. See you outside when you're through, Wilson."

Halfway to the corral Johnny paused, wondering should he go back for his gun-belt. Then he shrugged his shoulders; he didn't think there'd be any need for that.

Mrs. Danvers fried up a mess of bacon and beans, and made fresh coffee. Young Wilson ate like a man in real need and yet found time to chat cheerfully with his hostess.

" Gee ! I feel better by about a million bucks, Mrs. Danvers," he said at last. " Guess I'll be on my way. Your son'll be around, reckon ? "

" You'll find him," said Mrs. Danvers smiling and shaking his hand. " Glad to have been of help. Goodbye—and good luck."

" Thank you, ma'am," said Wilson, quietly. " I sure need a little luck, at that. So long, Ajax."

The hound condescended to rise again and lick at the out-stretched hand. Then he wagged his tail slowly and followed Wilson to the door, standing there watching him until he disappeared around the angle of the bunk-house.

Johnny was in the horse corral, frowning at Wilson's mount. Baldy had given it feed and off-saddled it before ambling back to his cook-shack.

" Your cayuse is dead lame, Wilson," the Double D boss said, shortly. " You'll get nothin' further out of him for weeks."

" I'll need another mount, then," said Wilson, coldly. " I'll take that grey yonder."

" Say ! That's my Smokey hoss—best critter on the ranch. I—— "

" I said I'll take that grey ! " snapped the stranger.

Johnny turned. He knew without looking that a gun was covering him. The ice in Wilson's voice had gone right into him. Wilson was desperate.

" I heard you," said Johnny. " Do you have to pull a gun on a feller ? "

" I *have* to have a hoss ! " said Wilson. " My own cayuse is in bad shape—you said so yourself. When he mends you won't have such a bad bargain in the swap. One day, maybe, I'll pay you back for what you're doin', Danvers. Right now I gotta hurry."

" Put up your smoke-pole," said Johnny, quietly. " You can borrow Smokey."

Wilson hesitated for a moment. Then he holstered the Colt .45 and smiled again. A few seconds later he was slapping his own saddle onto Johnny's prized mount.

" Thanks, Danvers," he said, simply. " I'll remember this. So long ! "

He was astride and off all in one movement. Johnny stood watching as Smokey leaped the corral gate and set off at speed towards the western trail.

" A hoss-thief now ! " muttered the Double D boss. " Do I pick 'em—or do I ? "

His mother was on the ranch-house veranda, peeling sweet potatoes, when he strode that way a little later.

" Quite a nice young man, Johnny," she said with a smile " I hope he gets away ! "

" He'll get away maybe—on my Smokey hoss ! " snapped Johnny. " Dad-blamed hoss-thief ! "

" Horse-thief ? Never ! " said Mrs. Danvers, with conviction. " That boy never did anything *really* wrong, I know. He was too clean, too straight and too open ever to be wicked."

" Pulled a gun on me—*and* took my Smokey hoss," repeated Johnny.

" *I* didn't hear any shooting," said Mrs. Danvers, quietly. " He was in desperate need, Johnny. He *borrowed* your horse—just *showed* you a gun to prove his desperation."

" Maybe," replied Johnny, with a frown. " Reckon we'll hear more about this. That guy's being hunted."

" Of *course* he's being hunted," agreed Mrs. Danvers. " That's why he came here. He knew the Danvers would give him a square deal. But mark my words, Johnny. He's done nothing really very wrong. I feel it that way—and so did Ajax. You never saw Ajax act that way with a stranger before."

" He was on the lam," persisted Johnny. " He pulled a gun—and he took my best horse."

" We don't know all the facts," said Mrs. Danvers. " Remember that, Johnny. We don't know all the facts."

" You're right I guess, Ma," said Johnny. " We sure don't know all the facts."

Two hours later Johnny saw another cloud of dust rising up from the Three Springs trail. He wasn't surprised—he'd been watching for just that very thing. That's why his gun-belt was now about his waist, his twin guns newly cleaned and fully loaded.

The cloud became a body of horsemen—five of them, who, without ceremony, rode right up to the ranch-house steps before reining in their foam-lathered mounts.

Johnny scented trouble—and sure enough he was right.

"Where's the boss o' this outfit?" demanded a burly, dark-skinned man whose face was marked from mouth to ear with a scar that looked like a piece of stuck-on bacon rind.

"Right here" said Johnny, quietly.

"Huh!" grunted the big fellow, with a sneer. "Waal, kid—I'm Higson, deputy-sheriff o' Sunvale City. I'm huntin' a killer who's known to have ridden this way. Young shaver, five-foot-ten, around a hundred and fifty pounds; name o' Wilson. Seen anythin' of him recent?"

"And be careful how you answer that, ranny!" added another of the riders. "Wilson's horse is in the corral yonder, Blackie. He's *been* here."

He pointed to the corral where Wilson's lamed mount was standing in a forlorn and dejected attitude. Johnny knew that it was useless to lie with that evidence in plain sight. There were five of them, all tough hombres, all fully heeled; he wouldn't stand a dog's chance if he attempted to cut loose.

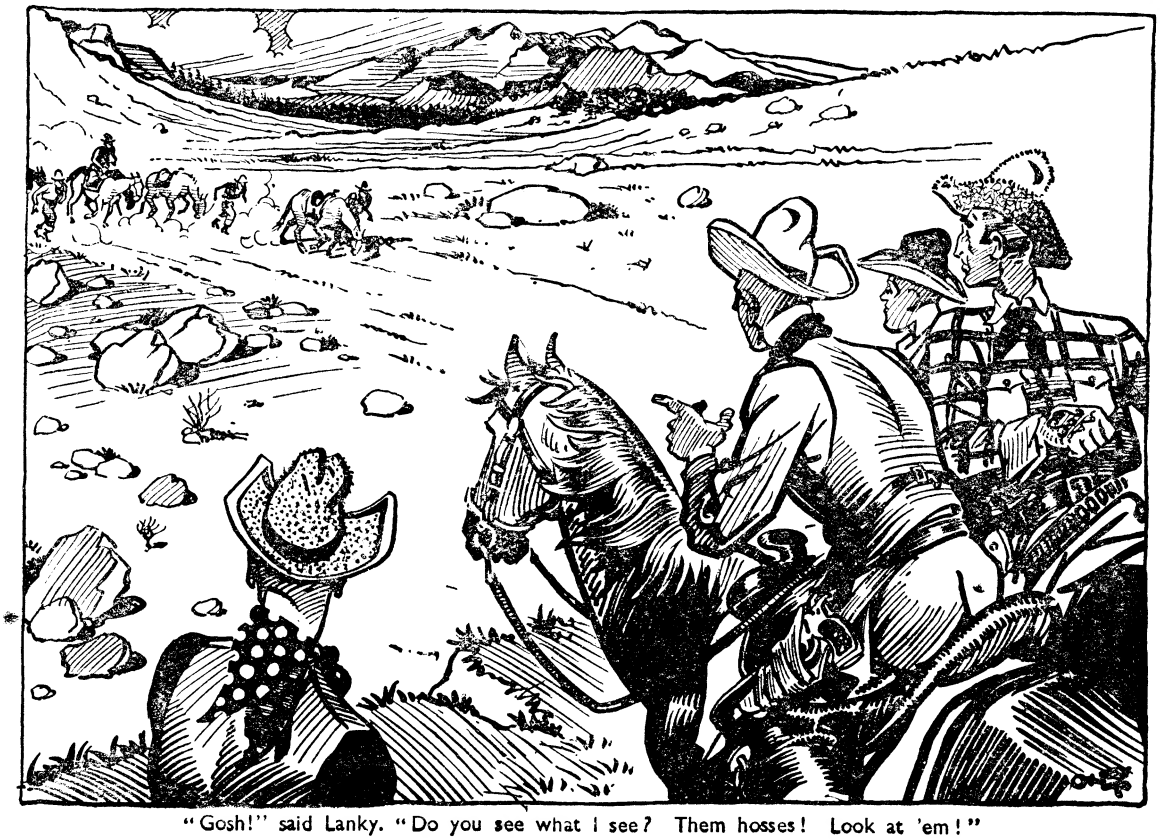
"A feller certainly come here for chow," he said. "I fed him and loaned him a hoss."

"Huh! That's aiding and abettin' a wanted man!" barked Higson. "You need to watch your step, mister."

"How'd I know he was wanted?" asked Johnny. "He didn't let on—and he carried no advertising about it."

"O.K., wise guy—yuh didn't know. Fergit it," said Higson, with another sneer. "But yuh know now. We're huntin' this bird and we need grub and a change o' horses."

"The grub shack's yonder," said Johnny, pointing brusquely. "Baldy will rustle yuh a meal."



"Gosh!" said Lanky. "Do you see what I see? Them hosses! Look at 'em!"

" You fellers find the cook," said Higson. " Come intuh the house, feller. I want to talk to you ! "

Johnny resisted the impulse to show fight. Those other four were far too handy still. Higson almost forced his way into the ranch-house kitchen, though he seemed a little disconcerted at the sight of a woman there.

Mrs. Danvers frowned at the invasion of her domain and Ajax bounded up with a growl, his hackles rising, his great white fangs bared.

" Sorry, ma'am ! " muttered Higson. " Just wanted to impress on the youngster that we're the law and we gotta be helped. I—— "

He paused, his eye on Ajax who was crouching for a spring.

" Ugly brute ! " he muttered. " Yuh better keep him off me, ma'am. I wouldn't like to have to shoot him. Guess I'll go join the posse and get some grub."

" Look after, Ajax, Ma," said Johnny, hurriedly. " I'll go see about hosses for the law."

In the cook-shack the posse ate noisily, hustling old Baldy around to fill and re-fill their plates and mugs. But within half-an-hour they were ready to ride again.

Higson strode out from the cook-shack first, wiping his mouth on the back of his great ham-like hand.

" Them hosses for us kid ? " he demanded as he saw Johnny by the corral gate. " Uh-huh ! They'll do. Get weaving, fellers. Slap your saddles on the fresh mounts and we'll hit the trail. Guess we'll catch up with Wilson come nightfall after all."

Johnny watched them swap saddles. Higson loud-mouthed his orders to them and then, from the saddle, once more addressed the Double D boss.

" Our own hosses have been rid hard," he said. " They'll need to rest up a few days. We'll come back for 'em later and return your horses. Glad you made no trouble, kid. Adios ! "

They rode out of the corral and towards the western trail. Johnny watched them coldly until he saw Higson quirt his mount and swing the posse into a loping gallop.

" Killers all ! " he muttered. " God help Wilson when they catch up with him. A necktie party there if ever I saw one ! "

His mother came hurrying from the ranch-house, Ajax at her heels.

" They've gone, son ? " she queried. " Horrible men—horrible ! Ajax knew that, didn't he ? I've had an awful time keeping him in. Horrible creatures ! Which way did they go ? "

" West—after Wilson," Johnny said, shortly.

" That boy ! " said Mrs. Danvers. " Johnny ! They mustn't catch him. They'll —they'll kill him. Didn't you see that in their eyes ? "

" I saw it Ma," said Johnny and turned away.

" Yet—— " said Mrs. Danvers, hopefully. " Yet—on tired horses they won't make much headway—and with the boy on your fresh Smokey horse he'll have a fighting chance—he might even get away. He—— "

She paused, noting the horses in the corral. " Johnny ! " she said. " You—you didn't give them *fresh* horses ? Oh, son ! How could you ? How could you—an innocent boy like that. Murderers, all of them, and you gave them fresh horses. Johnny I—I'm—— "

" What could I do—against five of them ?" demanded Johnny in a more heated tone than he had ever used to his mother before. " They'd have taken horses, anyway. I could have argued ; I could have got myself shot up ; Baldy, too—maybe you, Ma. They'd have got hosses just the same. They must have knowed we was here on our own, and the rest of the fellers in town. They knew they'd got me where they wanted me ! "

Mrs. Donovan turned away, her face white. " Ma ! Oh, Ma," Johnny said. " Listen to me. I—— "

She turned away again and strode steadily to the ranch-house.

The True Facts

HE was making his afternoon inspection of his cattle when Lanky Weston and the boys returned from town. Learning from Baldy that the young boss was out on the range, Lanky led Curly and Slick in a rousing gallop to give a hand.

" Aw, things were kinda slow in town to-day, Johnny," said the foreman. " We decided to light for home. There was a bit of a ruckus late last night—rather, early this morning. There was a wild bunch shootin' things up a bit and—— "

" Yeah—six of 'em," cut in Curly, excitedly. " Led by a big scar-faced baboon who called hisself Higson, Blackie Higson. They started shootin' up Danton's Saloon and then picked on a young waddy, a stranger in town, name o' Wilson. He—— "

" I saw the whole thing," interrupted Slick. " One o' this bunch cornered young Wilson and tried to gun-whip him. Wilson warned him to quit ; said he wasn't playing. Where upon the big gorilla takes a shot at the youngster. I saw Wilson draw then. Gosh ! I ain't seen anything so fast all my days."

" Wilson managed to back out with his guns and then this Blackie Higson spilled a bibful. He said the shot man was his pard ; claimed he was a deputy sheriff, too. Anyway he found Judge Withers and made the old man sign a warrant that Wilson was to be brought in—dead or alive. Higson and the remaining four hombres lit out on the man-hunt then. Heard they was chasing him east. Hope he got away. I—— "

" He didn't go east," said Johnny slowly. " Or if he did, he doubled back and then headed west. He was here—before midday. Ma gave him chow and—and I loaned him a hoss."

" Good for you, Johnny ! " said Lanky.

" Higson was here too," said Johnny. " With his bunch. I had to give them fresh horses. They took out after Wilson not so long after he'd left here—only a coupla hours back at that."

For a moment there was dead silence.

" You say you *gave* 'em hosses, Johnny ? " asked Lanky, slowly. " You mean—without *any* argument ? "

" What was the sense in me arguing ? " asked Johnny. " I was practically alone here —and there was five of 'em. Did I have to get myself shot up without a real chance ? "

"Seems kinda waste o' time to talk, Johnny," said Lanky slowly. " I been thinkin' some time now about movin' on. I guess you can run this two-bit spread without me. I—— "

" You mean you're quittin'—just because I didn't throw down on five murdering hombres, eh, Lanky ? " cut in Johnny.

" Hey ! Wait a minute ! We got company ! " cried Curly. " Look who's coming across that bit of flat from the main trail."

" It's them right enough ! " said Lanky. " Only *five* of 'em—which means they never got Wilson—there hasn't been time for 'em to catch up with him *and* get back here. Gosh ! Do you see what I see, Curly ? Them hosses ! Look at 'em ! "

" The fakes ! " yelped Curly. " Johnny—I sure hand it to you ! You got brains."

" Which often is better than havin' an itchy trigger finger," said Johnny quietly. " Yeah, I worked the fakes on to 'em. I knew they wouldn't get far on those horses. You still want to quit, Lanky ? "

" Aw, fergit it, Johnny. I was a fool to get you sized up wrong," said the foreman uncomfortably. " Get set fellers. These birds are bad medicine."

But there was no fight left in Blackie Higson and his bunch now. For the last hour or so they'd been forced to walk the blistering trail with a bunch of no-good horses tagging on behind them.

" You can keep them hosses, Higson," Johnny said. " I don't want 'em back and I don't want no man to say I set you adrift without a mount. Your horses will do in exchange I reckon. Now get off my land—and stay off."

Amid the crackle of sky-flung bullets Higson and his gang hobbled on their weary way whilst Johnny headed his boys back to the Double D.

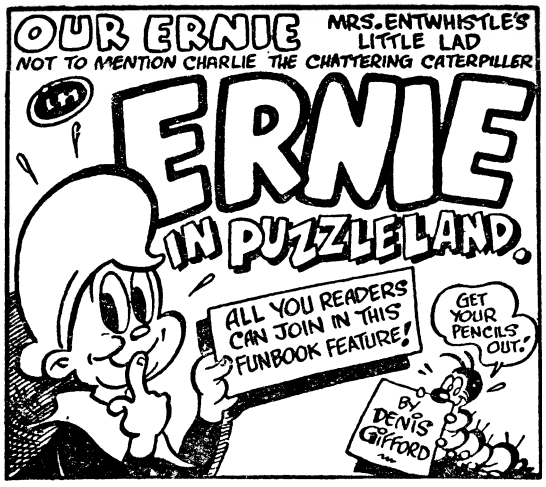
His mother was waiting for him in the kitchen when he entered a little later.

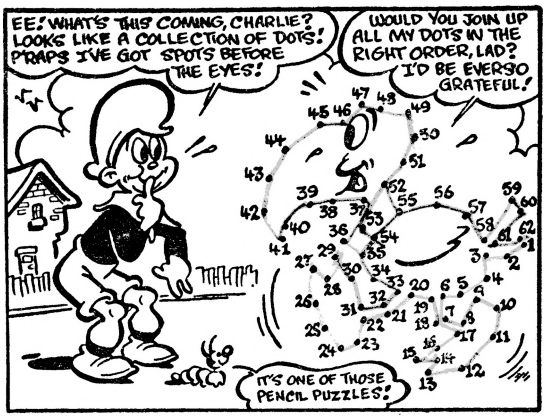
" I'm sorry, son," she said. " I—I guess I should have trusted you. Can you—will you forgive me ? "

" Sure, Ma—forget it ! " said the young boss of the Double D. "You had every reason to think the worst o' me—you just didn't know all the facts ! "

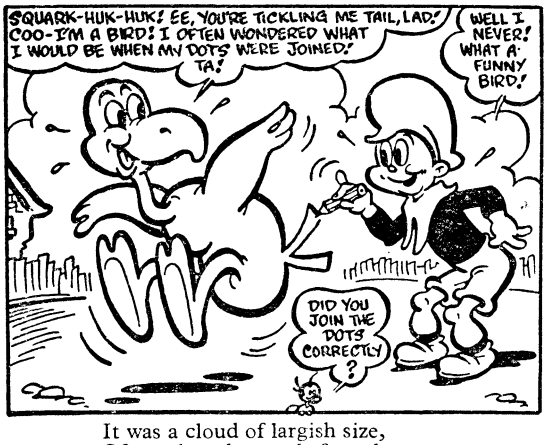
" That's right son," said his mother slowly. " I just didn't know all the facts."

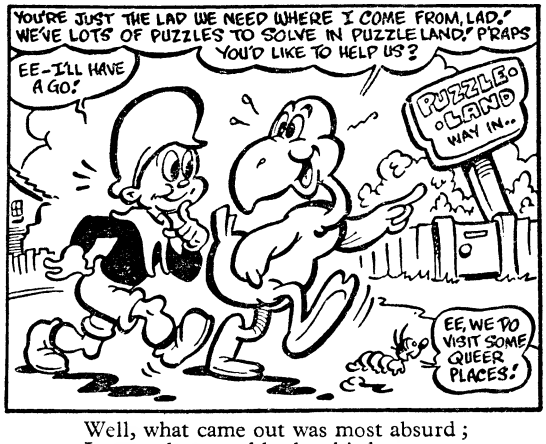
THE END


OUR ERNIE
MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD
NOT TO MENTION CHARLIE THE CHATTERING CATERPILLER
ERNIE IN PUZZLELAND.
ALL YOU READERS CAN JOIN IN THIS FUNBOOK FEATURE!
GET YOUR PENCILS OUT.
BY DENIS GIFFORD


EE! WHAT'S THIS COMING, CHARLIE? LOOKS LIKE A COLLECTION OF DOTS! PRAPS I'VE GOT SPOTS BEFORE THE EYES!
WOULD YOU JOIN UP ALL MY DOTS IN THE RIGHT ORDER, LAD? I'D BE EVER SO GRATEFUL!
IT'S ONE OF THOSE PENCIL PUZZLES!

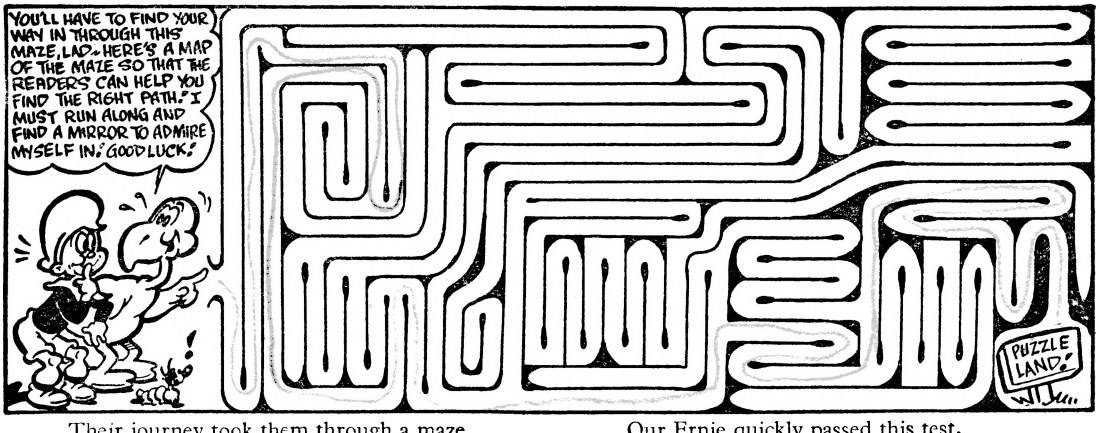
Our Ernie is a lively lad,
Who's never ever really bad
Though always looking for a lark;
And once he met one in the park!


SQUARK-HUK-HUK! EE, YOU'RE TICKLING ME TAIL, LAD! COO-I'M A BIRD! I OFTEN WONDERED WHAT I WOULD BE WHEN MY DOTS WERE JOINED. TA!
WELL I NEVER! WHAT A FUNNY BIRD!
DID YOU JOIN THE DOTS CORRECTLY?


YOU'RE JUST THE LAD WE NEED WHERE I COME FROM, LAD! WE'VE LOTS OF PUZZLES TO SOLVE IN PUZZLE LAND! PRAPS YOU'D LIKE TO HELP US?
EE-I'LL HAVE A GO!
PUZZLE-LAND WAY IN..
EE, WE DO VISIT SOME QUEER PLACES!

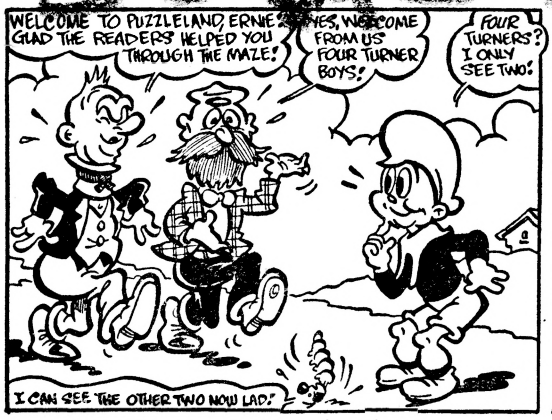
It was a cloud of largish size,
Of numbered spots before the eyes,
So Ernie whipped his pencil out,
And lined them swiftly round about!

Well, what came out was most absurd;
It was a large and beakey bird,
Which took Our Ernie by the hand,
To guide him into puzzle-land!

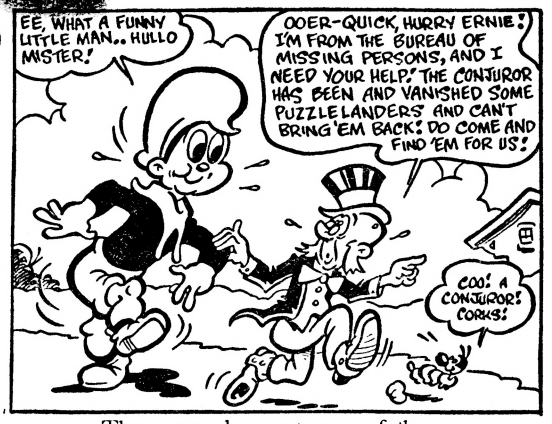

YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND YOUR WAY IN THROUGH THIS MAZE, LAD. HERE'S A MAP OF THE MAZE SO THAT THE READERS CAN HELP YOU FIND THE RIGHT PATH. I MUST RUN ALONG AND FIND A MIRROR TO ADMIRE MYSELF IN. GOOD LUCK!
PUZZLE LAND!

Their journey took them through a maze,
Which seemed to offer lots of ways,
Though really there was only one,
And finding it was lots of fun!

Our Ernie quickly passed this test,
And, as I quite expect you've guessed,
It's there for you to try your hand,
At getting into puzzle-land!


WELCOME TO PUZZLELAND ERNIE! GLAD THE READERS HELPED YOU THROUGH THE MAZE!
YES, WELCOME FROM US FOUR TURNER BOYS!
FOUR TURNERS? I ONLY SEE TWO!
I CAN SEE THE OTHER TWO NOW LAD!

So Ernie reached this land, and then,
He met *two* queerish looking men
Who were most certain they were *four* !
You'll have to search to find two more !


EE, WHAT A FUNNY LITTLE MAN.. HULLO MISTER!
OOER-QUICK, HURRY ERNIE! I'M FROM THE BUREAU OF MISSING PERSONS, AND I NEED YOUR HELP! THE CONJUROR HAS BEEN AND VANISHED SOME PUZZLELANDERS AND CAN'T BRING 'EM BACK! DO COME AND FIND 'EM FOR US!
COO! A CONJUROR! CORKS!

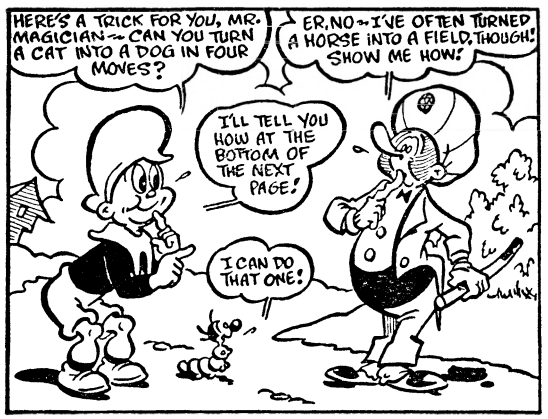
These upsy-downsy two way folk,
Struck Ernie as a proper joke,
But then a chappy sought his aid
Who was most put out and dismayed !

ABRACADABRA... GILLY GILLY.. O, IT'S NO USE! THEY'RE INVISIBLE!
NO THEY'RE NOT, MR. CONJUROR — I CAN SEE THEM.. A DOG.. A NELEFUMP.. AND A COW!
CAN YOU SEE THEM?

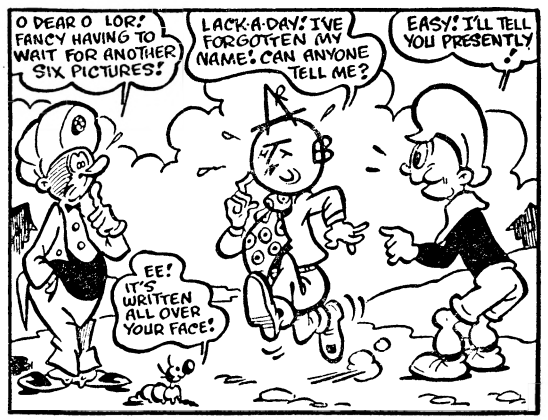
They'd had a magic accident,
And three of them had been and went——
So see if you can find their track,
And help Our Ernie get them back !

EE, THANKS LAD! HERE'S A LIST OF MAGIC NUMBERS IN YOUR HONOUR! CAN YOU DECIPHER THEM?
NO, BUT I BET THEY'D MAKE SENSE IF I HELD IT IN FRONT OF A MIRROR!
POOF! THAT'S EASY TO US BRAINY CHARACTERS!

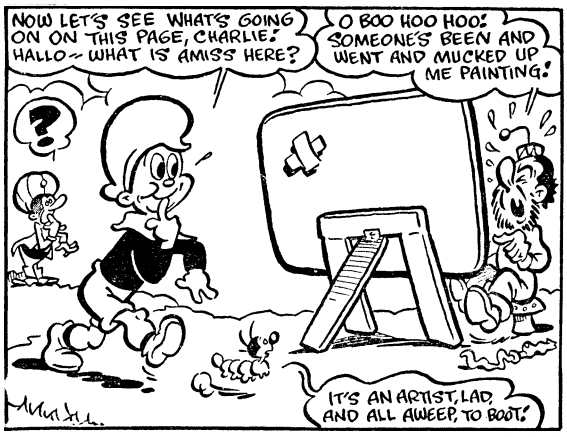
To thank Our Ernie for his aid,
A presentation then was made,
And what the thing was all about,
Is something for you to find out !


HERE'S A TRICK FOR YOU, MR. MAGICIAN — CAN YOU TURN A CAT INTO A DOG IN FOUR MOVES?
ER, NO — I'VE OFTEN TURNED A HORSE INTO A FIELD, THOUGH! SHOW ME HOW!
I'LL TELL YOU HOW AT THE BOTTOM OF THE NEXT PAGE!
I CAN DO THAT ONE!

But Ernie too knows how to do
A catchy sort of trick or two,
And tried one on the wizard man——
So try to do it—if you can !


O DEAR O LOR! FANCY HAVING TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER SIX PICTURES!
LACK-A-DAY! I'VE FORGOTTEN MY NAME! CAN ANYONE TELL ME?
EASY! I'LL TELL YOU PRESENTLY!
EE! IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE!

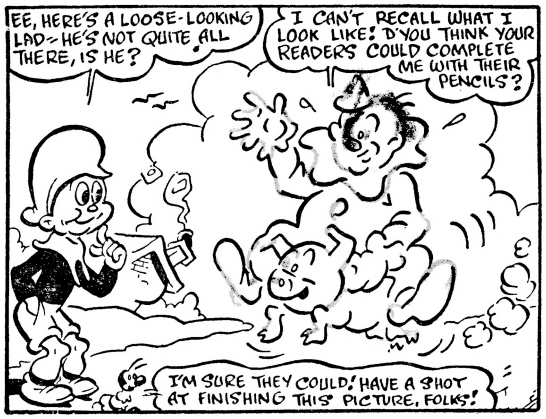
Before the answer had been found,
Up came a man with face so round,
Who'd quite forgotten his own name——
Perhaps you'd like to guess the same ?


NOW LET'S SEE WHAT'S GOING ON ON THIS PAGE, CHARLIE! HALLO~ WHAT IS AMISS HERE?
O BOO HOO HOO! SOMEONE'S BEEN AND WENT AND MUCKED UP ME PAINTING!
IT'S AN ARTIST, LAD, AND ALL AWEEP, TO BOOT!

Leaving the wizard all at sea,
And as mixed-uppish as could be,
Our Ernie went to see just why,
An artist chappy had to cry!

EE-ALL YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS TO SHADE IN ALL THE SHAPES MARKED X, Y AND Z! PRAPS THE READERS WILL HELP YOU THERE!
GET YOUR PENCILS OUT AND TRY IT!
OO TA! WHAT A CLEVER LAD!

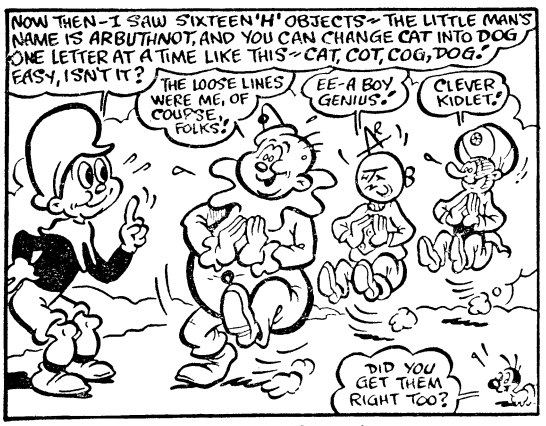
He'd drawn a picture, bit by bit,
Then lost the total sense of it,
But if you take a pencil, you
Can find what he set out to do!


EE, HERE'S A LOOSE-LOOKING LAD~HE'S NOT QUITE ALL THERE, IS HE?
I CAN'T RECALL WHAT I LOOK LIKE! D'YOU THINK YOUR READERS COULD COMPLETE ME WITH THEIR PENCILS?
I'M SURE THEY COULD! HAVE A SHOT AT FINISHING THIS PICTURE, FOLKS!

Now while you've got your pencil out,
And feel like waving it about,
Just go to work, if you don't mind,
And lots more fun I'm sure you'll find!

TA, CHUMS! NOW THEN, LAD- CAN YOU TELL ME HOW MANY OBJECTS THERE ARE HERE BEGINNING WITH THE LETTER H?
SIMPLE!
CAN I COUNT YOUR HANDS AS TWO, LAD?

Our Ernie made the clown appear,
And then they found some doings queer,
With lots of aitches, if you please.
(Though " H'axe " should not be one of these!)


NOW THEN-I SAW SIXTEEN 'H' OBJECTS~THE LITTLE MAN'S NAME IS ARBUTHNOT, AND YOU CAN CHANGE CAT INTO DOG ONE LETTER AT A TIME LIKE THIS~CAT, COT, COG, DOG! EASY, ISN'T IT?
THE LOOSE LINES WERE ME, OF COURSE, FOLKS!
EE-A BOY GENIUS!
CLEVER KIDLET!
DID YOU GET THEM RIGHT TOO?

Then Ernie told the folks about
The Riddle-ree he had set out,
And you can see if you have guessed,
The proper answers to his test!

CHEERIO LAD~COME BACK AND SEE US AGAIN SOME DAY, WON'T YOU?
I WILL THAT- BUT MY NEXT PUZZLE IS WONDERING WHAT'S FOR TEA! CHEERIO, FOLKS!
TA-TA! WE'VE ENJOYED OURSELVES EVER SO, HAVEN'T WE, LAD!
The End

So Ernie has had lots of fun,
And so, I hope, has every one,
And all Our Ernie wants to see,
Is what his Ma has got for tea!

THE GREENWOOD BOY

A Stirring Story of Robin Hood

By REX HARDINGE

Help for Robin

"HE shall hang for an outlaw and a thief!" Rob Martin tensed at the terrible words. High in the upper branches of a great oak tree in Sherwood forest, he peered down at the little group of men gathered below him.

He recognised the fat and pompous figure of the High Sheriff of Nottingham, sitting in all his magnificence on a tall grey horse, and gathered round him were a number of his yeomen, surly fellows who scowled at the prisoner they had flung down at the foot of the tree.

Rob could not see this man's face, for he sat with his back to the trunk of the tree, his hands cruelly bound behind him, but the boy could see that he wore a coat of Lincoln green, and with beating heart Rob guessed what he was.

The Sheriff put the boy's thoughts into words.

"'Tis indeed one of Robin Hood's scurvy outlaws. I say that he shall hang, just as his leader shall hang tomorrow in my city of Nottingham."

A small hand touched Rob's arm, and he turned to look into his sister Gillian's nut-brown face, which had paled slightly at the thought of what was happening below. Rob smiled reassuringly. Not for nothing had his father named him after the famous Robin Hood. Both he and Gillian had been born and brought up in Sherwood Forest, and were used to the dangers of the forest, where there was always war between the outlaws and the merciless Sheriff, for their father was a woodsman, one of the humble people who blessed the name of Robin Hood, the only man who stood up for their rights.

Rob also knew the danger of being caught by the Sheriff at this moment. He was quite capable of hanging them too, young though they were. But they couldn't leave Robin Hood's man to die.

Suddenly he nudged Gillian and put his lips close to her ear.

" Unravel a thread from my jerkin," he whispered. " I want a long string."

Gillian said nothing, but patiently set to work to obey. With nimble fingers she pulled threads from both their clothes and knotted them to make a long line, which she carefully coiled and passed to Rob. She had no idea what he planned to do, but backed him up calmly and quietly as always.

She saw him take his small dagger from his belt and tie it to the end of the line.

The Sheriff and his men had drawn aside to discuss the hanging. Only the prisoner sat under the tree. He sat watching his captors calmly, with no trace of fear on his proud face.

Gillian held her breath as Rob carefully lowered the dagger. She realised that everything now depended on the nerves of the man below. If he betrayed surprise when the dagger reached him—if he cried out at the touch of it—made any movement—the Sheriff and his men would swing round.

But the prisoner was too well trained in Robin Hood's service. He never stirred. No flicker showed in his face, as Rob unerringly lowered the knife so that it touched the bare hands bound behind his back.

Calmly the strong fingers felt around until they could take hold on the shaft. Coolly he twisted the dagger to turn the blade towards the tight cords between his wrists.

Gillian's heart jumped when she saw blood flow. She realised that the man had cut himself while trying to get the blade to the cords. But he never winced. He sat rigid, his face expressionless, while deliberately he sawed with the sharp edge.

At last he drew his hands apart slightly, still holding the dagger, and the watchers realised that he was free.

But he didn't move. He stayed sitting there, as though still bound, until the Sheriff spurred his horse towards him.

" So, varlet—slayer of the King's venison—robber—outlaw—your Robin Hood cannot help you now—— "

The snarling voice ended in a gasp, for the prisoner came to life. Like a green streak he left the ground, as though his legs were springs. He landed squarely on the Sheriff and knocked him flying from the saddle.

The yeomen were so startled that, for a moment, they could only stand and stare, and that was all the time the prisoner needed. But he did not immediately gallop away to safety.

Instead he swung the horse back under the oak.

" Drop down behind me, friend," he called softly ; then he gave a gasp of surprise, when, instead of the man he expected, two small, lithe figures slid down on to the horse's back behind him.

" Gramercy !—just a lad and a lass !—— " he gasped, as Gillian clung to his belt. But Rob, behind her, twisted round, and now his short, stout bow was in his hands, with an arrow ready.

" Ride on, good sir," he called. " My arrow is waiting for the first of these knaves who tries to stop us."

The escaped outlaw's laugh rang out gaily.

" I take back my words—not a lad and a lass, but a doughty bowman and gallant maid," he declared, as he dug his heels into the horse's flanks and made it leap forward. " Ho now, knaves—who is first for a broken skull ? "

With amazing strength he ripped a stirrup-leather loose, and swung the heavy stirrup on the end of its strap, felling with two swift blows the men who sprang at him from left and right. A third man flashed a dagger, but Rob's bowstring twanged, and the knife went flying into the undergrowth as the arrow unerringly found its mark in the man's wrist.

The Sheriff himself sprang up, drawing his sword, but Gillian was no passenger on this wild dash. She had been busy untying one of the bags hung from the saddle, and it was the full weight of a bag of the gold that he had extorted from poor people that morning that hit the Sheriff in the chest and bowled him over again, for Gillian's aim was every bit as deadly as her brother's.

Then the horse sped on, twisting and turning through the greenwood until any pursuit was left far behind.

The rescued man pulled up at last in a small clearing. He was still laughing as he slid from the saddle.

" Good morrow, good friends," he said,

Rob lowered the knife so that it touched the prisoner's bare hands, bound behind his back.

with a sweeping bow. " I am named Will Scarlet, and my life is yours."

" Rob and Gillian Martin, sir," replied Rob, also bowing, while his sister curtsied, but both were wide-eyed now with excitement for they knew of Will Scarlet as one of Robin Hood's most famous lieutenants.

" Rob ? " said Will Scarlet. " Might that be short for Robin, lad ? "

" Yes. My father named me after Robin Hood, who saved our home once from the Sheriff's greed."

" Then are we doubly well met. Your work back yonder was a Robin's work right enough, young Rob. 'Twas worthy of the great Robin himself—— "

But the gay voice suddenly went thick and strange, and Will Scarlet folded at the knees and fell in a huddled heap on the grass.

" 'Tis nothing," he muttered, as Rob and Gillian bent anxiously over him. " 'Tis just that the Sheriff and his knaves would never have taken me if I had not already been sore wounded, and my strength almost spent. My meeting with them was my fourth fight of the day——But the fifth awaits me ! Help me to my feet. There's no time to waste——"

But, although he struggled to rise, he had to sink back again, and his eyes closed. Anxiously Rob and Gillian examined his wounds, which were many, but Gillian, who was wise in such things, having been taught by her mother, found that none of the wounds were deep, and the only trouble seemed to be that he was weak from loss of blood.

" He must rest—— "

But Will Scarlet's eyes opened again.

" Rest ? " he echoed. " Lass, there can be no rest when Robin Hood is to be hanged at Nottingham tomorrow ! "

He tried to get up again, but he had used up the last of his strength in a great burst, when escaping from the Sheriff, and now he was so weak that they had no trouble in holding him down. He relaxed suddenly, and looked at them for a long time without saying a word, and Rob guessed what he was thinking.

" Gillian and I are strong," he ventured. " We know the ways of the woods—— "

" And you have the hearts of lions," said Will Scarlet. " I wonder if you could—— "

" We would do anything to help Robin Hood," said Gillian, when he stopped again.

" Faith, and I believe there's nothing you couldn't do ! " decided Will Scarlet. " Nay, but 'tis a perilous mission for two youngsters, for he who takes over from me now must needs reach Robin Hood where he languishes in a cell in the heart of Nottingham. Aye, good Robin is caught at last, trapped while

rescuing the only son of a widow, who was to be hanged in the morning. The widow's son is free and now Robin is to take his place in the noose. But that must not be."

Will rolled over slightly.

"In my right boot, young Rob," he declared, "you will find a splendid file. It was my plan to disguise myself and smuggle it into Robin."

He spoke calmly, but both Rob and Gillian realised what that simple plan really meant. They had been in Nottingham before when the Sheriff had an important prisoner, and they remembered too well the rows of sharp-eyed guards around the castle, the questioning and searching of anybody who went anywhere near. And they knew that the Sheriff would take even stricter precautions with Robin Hood, the man he hated above all others.

Will Scarlet guessed what they were thinking, for he warned grimly——"He is in the deepest dungeon in the castle, and spread round the outside of it, and in every passage leading to it, are armed men, with orders to kill on sight any unauthorised person seen approaching."

"How did you expect to reach him, then?" asked Rob.

Will Scarlet shrugged.

"I'd have found a way, once I got to Nottingham," he declared.

Rob nodded. "That's what I shall have to do," he said quietly.

"*We!*" corrected Gillian.

And Will Scarlet smiled at them before he closed his eyes again.

"Bold Robin Hood's life rests in your hands," he whispered; "and I trow it could not rest in better!"

Inside the Castle

NOTTINGHAM Castle stands on a great hill, and the very sight of it, seeming to be frowning down at them, made Gillian shudder as Rob and she entered the town just before darkness fell. They soon found that the Sheriff had returned from Sherwood in a furious temper, and preparations were going ahead fast for the hanging of Robin Hood in the morning.

Never before had Rob seen so many armed men in the streets of Nottingham. Everywhere he looked, the Sheriff's ruffians were there, peering rudely into the faces of passers-by, even stopping many people and bullying them.

"How now, old woman——are you what you seem, or is this another trick of Robin Hood's merry men to rescue their scoundrelly leader?" snarled a huge man, seizing a poor old woman and almost shaking the breath out of her, while his companion plucked off her head-shawl and tugged at her grey hair to make sure that it was real.

Gillian shivered. Against all this, how were she and Rob to reach Robin Hood, far away under the great mass of the castle? But she smiled and chattered gaily, as she and her brother trudged along the cobbled streets, pretending that they were countryfolk come to town to see the hanging.

Rob was thinking hard. The first job was to get into the castle. Then to find Robin. He could feel the file, chafing his skin where it was hidden under his clothes.

Then Gillian suddenly tweaked at his sleeve. The sun had set and the gates of the city were closed and, in roaming round, the children had come to one of them. Gillian's forest-bred ears heard the stamping of hooves on the far side of the gate. At her signal, Rob slipped out of sight with her into the shadows.

"Open up!" roared a great voice outside. "Open up for my lord, the Bishop of Hartford."

There was immediately a great commotion at the gate. Guards appeared, running in all directions. They didn't seem to be sure what to do, for the Sheriff's orders were that the gates were in no circumstances to be opened again that night. On the other hand, the Bishop of Hartford was just as much feared as the Sheriff, for he was cruel and greedy, using his high office to swindle and bully.

"What want you here at this time of night?" ventured a guard.

"My lord, the Bishop, comes to see a dog hanged in the morning," came the reply. "Open up, or the knave Robin Hood will have companions to dance his last dance with him."

Another voice then sounded, the terrible, wheezy tones of the Bishop himself, furiously angry. But still the guards hesitated. The Bishop was angry, but he was safely outside the gate, where he couldn't get at them. The Sheriff, on the other hand, was in the city, and was the master they had to fear every day.

Then Rob suddenly moved. Before Gillian knew what he was doing, he had slipped away around the corner and left her. But he soon appeared again. He came running, panting as though he had sprinted a long way, and he dashed breathlessly up to the nearest guard.

"Messenger from the Sheriff," he gasped. "His Grace, the Bishop of Hartford, is expected during the night, and is to be admitted at once——"

But the guards didn't wait to hear any more. It wasn't until the gates were opening that the captain thought of turning to ask the boy for proof of his authority. And by then Rob was back with Gillian.

"The bishop is so fat he can't ride a horse. He always goes round in a big coach," he whispered in her ear. "Keep close to me and do what I do!"

Gillian followed him like a shadow. When the great clumsy coach came lumbering through, with the bishop's huge red face stuck out to hurl abuse at the guard, everybody drew back. Every eye was on that hated, feared red face. So Rob took his chance.

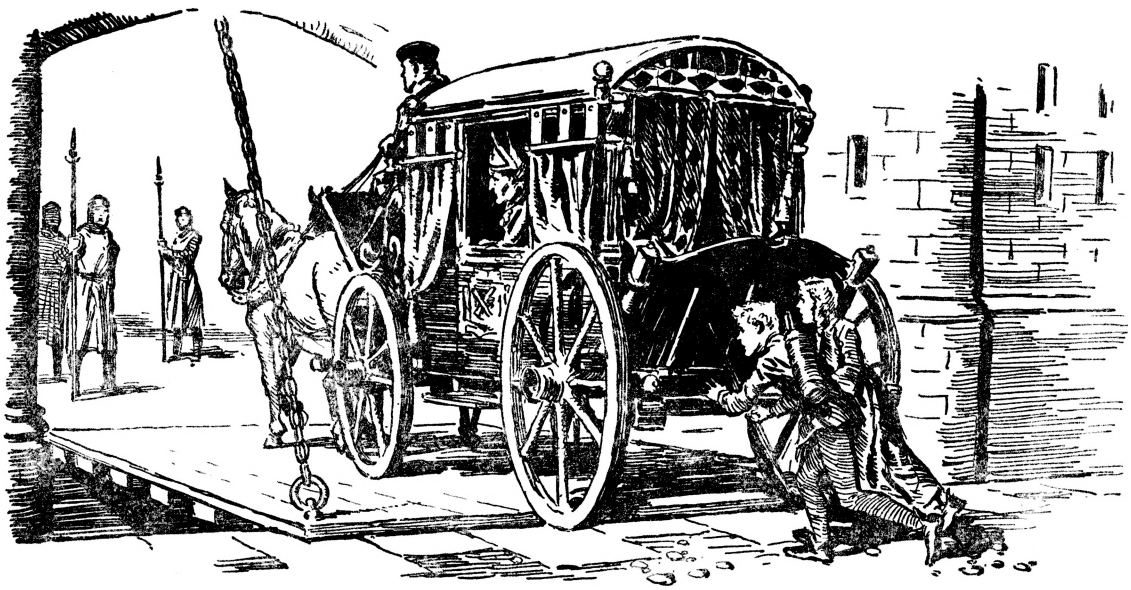
Down under the coach he dived, with Gillian after him.

Nobody saw them. Hidden by the great bulk of the coach, the boy and girl trotted along under the bishop, when at last his lordship lost his breath and gave orders to drive on to the castle.

There again there was a commotion at the gate, but this time the Sheriff himself appeared, and he daren't quarrel openly with his fellow tyrant. So the coach rolled on into the castle courtyard; and with it went Bob and Gillian.

So far, so good. They had got into the castle.

They had no difficulty about slipping out from under the coach, and melting into a dark corner. And they found such a bustle going on inside the castle that nobody paid any attention to them. They were able to wander around and explore, and they soon found how difficult their job was going to be.



Rob and Gillian dived down under the big, lumbering coach.

Robin Hood was down in a dungeon, and the only stair leading to it was packed with guards, one on every step, and several together at the top and the bottom.

Gillian left Rob and went to the stair all on her own. Looking very frightened and flustered, she pretended to cry when a guard stopped her.

" I am seeking my mother, who works in the castle," she wept.

" Well, little maid, you won't find her down these steps," said the guard, patting her quite gently on the shoulder. " This leads to a dungeon, and in there is only an outlaw waiting to be hanged."

" Poor man ! " said Gillian. " Isn't he allowed to have anybody with him to comfort him ? "

" Not he," said the guard. " The sheriff's taking no chances this time. There's not even a guard with him in the dungeon, for we're not forgetting the last time Robin Hood was held prisoner in this very castle. He overpowered the guard and changed clothes with him. So we're not even giving him that chance. Now, run along, lass, and keep away from this part of the castle."

" So Robin Hood is all alone in his cell ? " said Rob, when Gillian returned to him. " Perhaps that will help, if only we can find just exactly which dungeon."

He led the way around an upper terrace, looking down on the moat.

" Those barred windows, right down by the water, those must be the dungeons," he muttered. " But which is Robin Hood's ? "

He suddenly left Gillian and ran to a sentry who was standing near by.

" Please sir," he gasped, " my sister and I have just seen something moving down there in the water."

The sentry sprang to life at once.

" Where ? " he demanded, scowling down at the moat.

" I can't see it now," admitted Rob, " but I'm sure it came from one of those barred windows."

" Which one, boy ? "

" I—I'm not sure."

Other sentries came running up, hearing the commotion, and with them was an officer, who shouted, as soon as he heard what Rob had said—" You must know which window, boy. It may be that Robin Hood up to his tricks."

" Why—is he down there ? " said Rob innocently.

" He is !—that's the window of his dungeon —see, there ! " snapped the officer, pointing. " Was that where you saw something ? "

Rob shook his head.

" Oh no sir," he declared. " It was much further along to the left. And—and I think now that it was a shadow. See the way the shadows move on the water."

" Bah !—the boy's seeing things ! " snapped the officer, and turned away. " He's nothing but a half-witted young yokel ! "

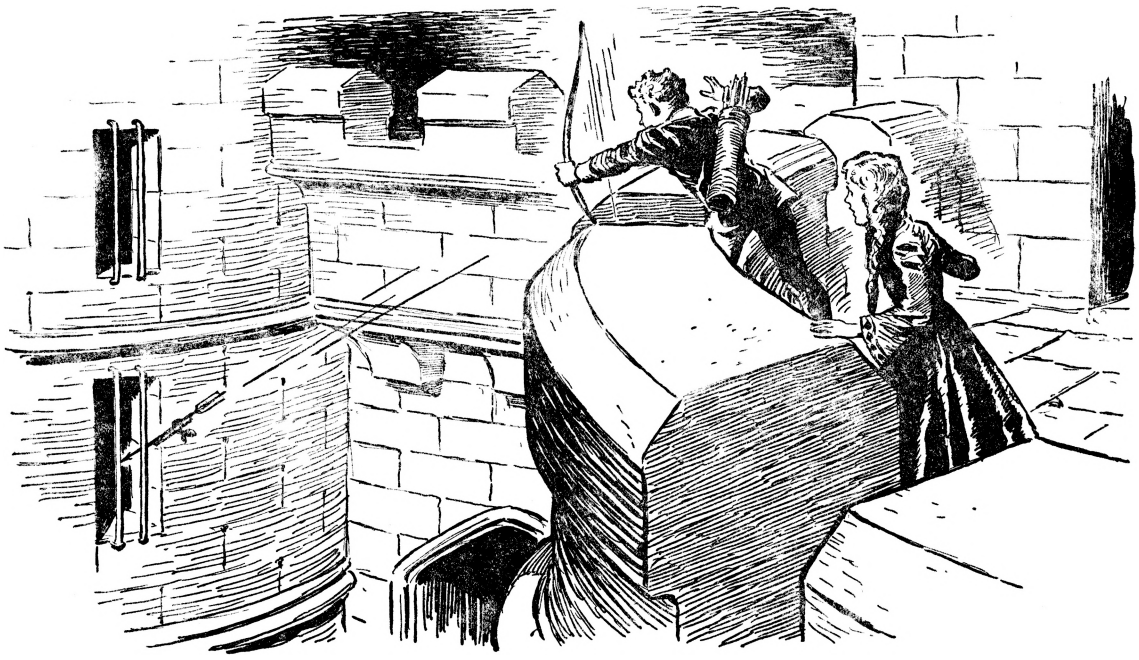
But he would have thought very differently if he watched Rob when he joined Gillian again. They hid together in a dark corner, and while Rob carefully tied the long file to one of his arrows, Gillian ripped a strip off her petticoat, and then cut her finger and used the blood and the point of another arrow to write on the white cloth—" Throw something white into the moat when you have filed through the bars and we will lower a rope and keep the sentries busy while you escape, good Robin Hood."

The cloth was then wound round the arrow, and Rob set off alone, creeping like a shadow along the wall until he reached where a jutting battlement gave him the best view he could get of the window of Robin Hood's dungeon. Then he fitted the heavily weighted arrow to his bow.

He paused for a moment, forcing himself to be calm and steady. He knew that this was the most important arrow he had ever shot. If he missed, the attempt to rescue Robin Hood must fail. And the shot was going to be extra difficult because the file spoilt the balance of his shaft. But he musn't miss !

Slowly, carefully, he drew his bow to the full extent, aiming for the streak of light that marked the window. He hesitated again for a moment, the thought striking him—supposing Robin Hood was standing by the window, in the path of the arrow !—but he must risk that.

Twang !



Rob cleverly shot the arrow through the window of Robin Hood's cell, and tied to the arrow was a file !

Free Again !

GILLIAN held her breath, listening—dreading to hear the clatter of the arrow against the wall, and then the splash as it dropped into the moat and took the file with it.

But there was no clatter—no splash—and a moment later Rob was beside her again.

" I did it ! " he panted triumphantly. " Dead centre through the window ! "

He couldn't say more, for there was a sudden rush of feet and guards came running, shouting to one another.

" Did you hear that ?—a bow twanged !—what was it ? " demanded one of them. Then he jumped with surprise and spun round, for another twang sounded close to him, echoed by laughter.

" You ! " he snarled, finding Rob and Gillian standing grinning at him. " What are you up to ? "

" Playing, if you please, sir," said Gillian demurely, with a neat little curtsey.

" Playing ? — but — but I heard a bow twang," snapped the man, bending to scowl at them. " You have no bow there ! "

" Oh no, sir," said Rob, who had quickly hidden both bow and arrows. Then he made the twanging sound with his mouth, and both he and Gillian fled, laughing.

" You young limbs, wait till I catch you !—playing tricks like that ! " fumed the guard ; but they moved so fast that they easily dodged him.

Their next move was to creep down to the castle storerooms. This was a place that Rob knew quite well, for he sometimes came with his father when there was wood to be delivered and he knew that there was plenty of rope of all sorts down there.

They found several guards even in the storerooms, for the sheriff was taking no chances that Robin Hood's men would be up to their tricks to rescue their leader. But the guards, who would have seized any strange man on sight, only gathered around and looked worried when Gillian came timidly in and asked them if they had seen her mother. They were quite upset about this poor little girl hunting the castle for her mother, and while they were drying her tears and making suggestions as to where her mother might be,

Rob was able to sneak round the back and collect all the rope he wanted.

But Gillian found herself in difficulties, for one of the guards decided that the only thing to do was to take her to the kitchens. Her mother must be there.

" Come along with me, little 'un," he said, grasping her hand and marching her away. And Gillian's heart missed a beat, for she knew that in the kitchens it would soon be found out that she had no mother working in the castle. And then, instead of being friendly, the guards would become suspicious. She shuddered to think what would happen to her and Rob then.

She tried to slip away when the man slackened his hold for a moment, but he grabbed.

" Nay, stay with me, little 'un. 'Tis dangerous for you to be going about the castle on your own, for there's no knowing what trouble mightn't start suddenly in an attempt to rescue this Robin Hood," warned the guard. " You don't want to get mixed up with that now, do you ? "

Gillian sighed, thinking that that was just exactly what she did want to do—and that if she didn't get away, there wouldn't be any rescue of Robin Hood. But she didn't despair, for Rob had never failed her yet.

And, sure enough, he suddenly came running.

" Gillian ! " he called, " what are you doing there ? Come quickly, mother is waiting. I've found her."

The guard eyed him doubtfully, and seemed inclined to insist still on taking the girl to her mother himself, but Rob soon settled that.

" We must hasten," he said, " for mother says the sheriff will be angry if he finds us here, and he is even now on the way round to see if he can catch any guards away from their posts ! "

Gillian couldn't help giggling when, with a gasp of dismay, the man let go of her hand and dashed back to the storerooms. But there was no time to rejoice at the way their quick wits were bamboozling the enemy at every turn. The stiffest task still had to be done.

They hurried to where Robin had hidden the rope, and took it to a point immediately above the window of Robin Hood's dungeon. There they made one end fast to a stone buttress, and hid the rest. Then, after a quick council-of-war, they set off, and their activities for the next spell were the strangest possible.

They separated and went all over the castle. Like busy ants, slipping almost noiselessly and invisibly through the night, they collected any bits of old armour that they could find lying around and arranged them in heaps in various niches high on the walls in various corridors, each heap with a hidden string dangling from it. Rob also found a lot of bits of wood and cloth, and other inflammable material, which he made into bundles. These he soaked in oil and hung over the outer wall of the castle on long cords. Finally he collected his bow and arrows from where he had hidden them.

Then he hurried back to the spot above Robin Hood's dungeon, which was at the far side of the castle from all his recent preparations.

He had not been there long when Gillian joined him, panting, for she had nearly been caught by the sheriff and the bishop, who had come suddenly into a corridor just as she was balanced on a high stool rigging a booby trap with two shields and rusty breast-plate.

" They looked at me very fiercely," she giggled, " and I managed to curtsey on the top of the stool, and said ' if it please your graces, my mother told me to tidy up all this rubbish.' And the bishop said 'Bless you, my child,' while the High Sheriff said it was about time somebody did some tidying up around here. With all this fuss about Robin Hood, all ordinary work is being neglected and the castle is getting like a pigsty. But, what matter, by tomorrow noon there will be no Robin Hood to cause all this—— "

She broke off, for Rob grasped her arm excitedly. Both were looking down towards the moat, and suddenly they saw something white flutter for an instant from the window beneath them.

" Now ! " whispered Rob, and both jumped to do their work exactly as they had planned it.

He dashed away until he reached the first of the hidden heaps of old armour. A quick tug at the string and down it crashed.

" Help !—help ! " he roared, making his voice as gruff as possible. " I am attacked."

He reached another string, and down clattered more armour.

Meanwhile Gillian crouched tensely by the rope. The crashes and shouts even made her jump, and she guessed that every guard would have spun round to stare towards the din. So over the parapet she pushed the rope and saw it go snaking down into the darkness.

For a moment it dangled, and she waited breathlessly. Then it went taut, and began to sway slightly. Somebody had grabbed the other end, and was beginning to climb up.

Meantime the din on the other side of the castle was growing louder and louder, and even more confusing. Rob was setting off booby traps as fast as he could reach them, making enough noise to suggest that an army was fighting in the castle. Then, as he dashed through the kitchen, he snatched a burning brand, and soon had his bundles hanging down the wall blazing merrily.

" This way—this way—to the west wall ! We are attacked ! "

He started the cry, and it spread like the wind, everybody taking it up.

" Attack—this way—to the west wall ! " rang the shout on all sides, and Rob had quite a difficult time working his way back to Gillian through the vast press of men rushing from all directions to line the west wall.

But he reached her at last, and she wasn't alone. A tall man stood beside her, and a grip of steel closed on Rob's arm.

" Ho, my staunch Rob—your sister has explained all to me. As one Robin to another—'Twas real Robins' work to-night, a gallant rescue nobly planned and bravely carried out," exclaimed the voice of Robin Hood himself, and Rob felt his heart almost bursting with pride. Particularly when the outlaw added—" What now, brave Rob ?—you are the leader here ! "

" This way," gulped Rob.

They led him quickly down to the stables, where all three of them slipped out of sight under the bishop's coach.

Rob had guessed that the bishop would drive off in a fury when he learnt that the outlaw had escaped and there would be no hanging, and he was right. Within an hour the horses were in the shafts, the bishop was sitting fuming in his coach, and the gates were flung open for him to drive away. And crouched beneath him, away from Nottingham Castle, went Rob and Gillian—and Robin Hood.

The bishop was in a fury, but he was in a worse one before long, when the traces were mysteriously cut, so that his horses bolted and left the coach stranded, with the bishop, terrified, in the wilds of the forest.

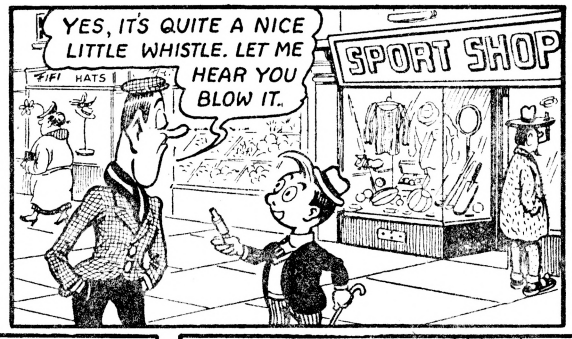
But by then Robin Hood was striding back to his camp in the greenwood, with a very tired Gillian and Rob on each side of him, and three happier people did not exist in all the length and breadth of England.

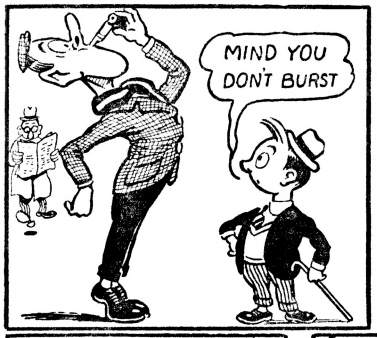
Robin Hood was free again, thanks to a boy and a girl who made a promise to Will Scarlet and kept it !

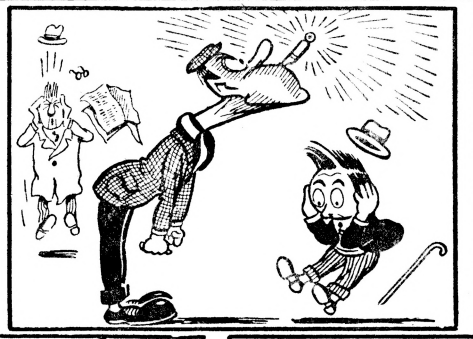
THE END

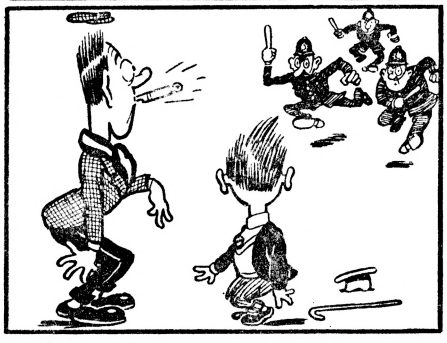
Rob and Gillian hurried Robin Hood down to the stables.

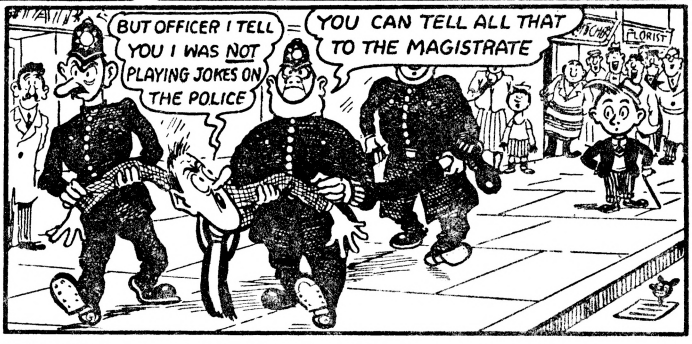
SPORTY
by
Reg. Wootton



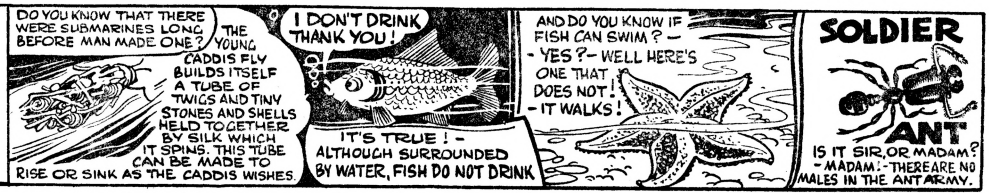




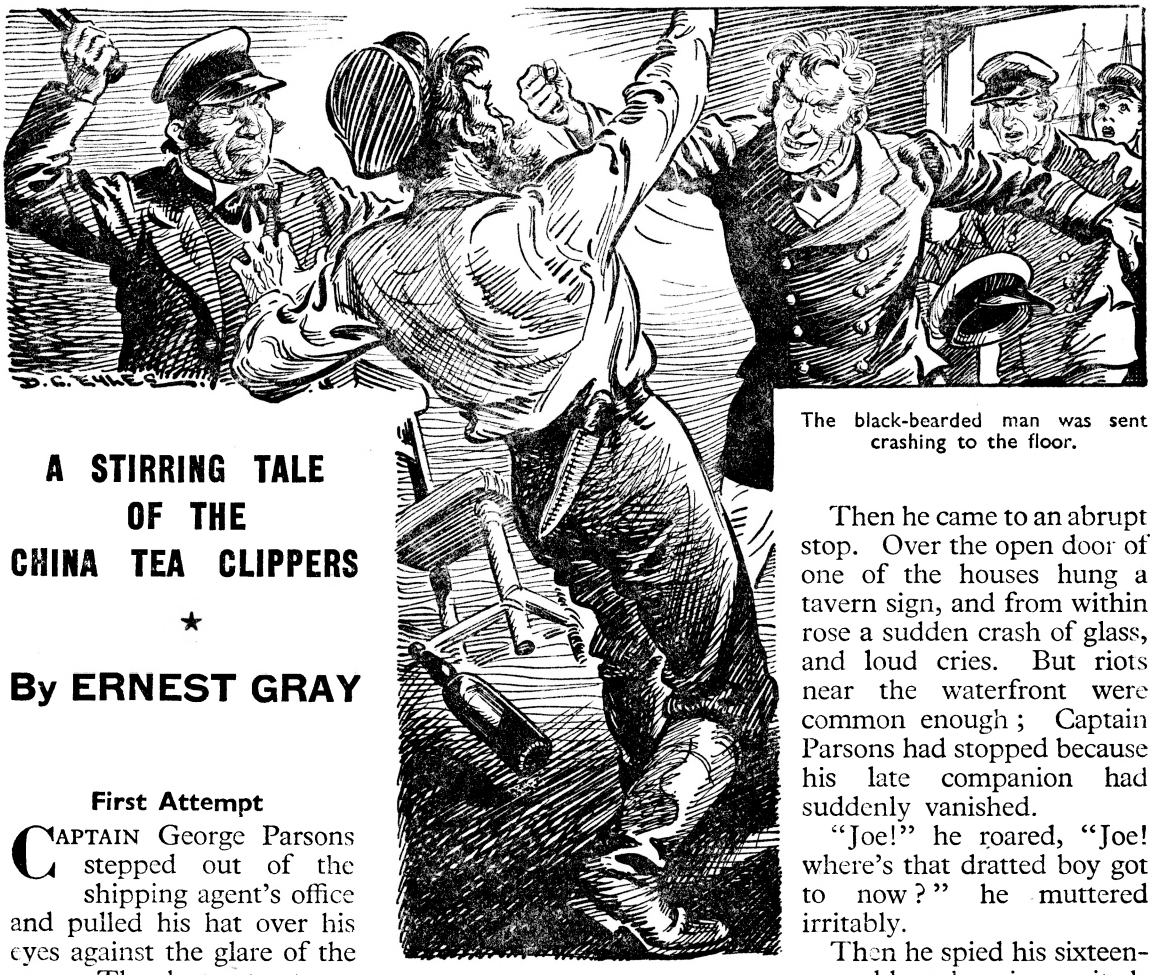




DO YOU KNOW?


DO YOU KNOW THAT THERE WERE SUBMARINES LONG BEFORE MAN MADE ONE? THE YOUNG CADDIS FLY BUILDS ITSELF A TUBE OF TWIGS AND TINY STONES AND SHELLS HELD TOGETHER BY SILK WHICH IT SPINS. THIS TUBE CAN BE MADE TO RISE OR SINK AS THE CADDIS WISHES.
I DON'T DRINK THANK YOU!
IT'S TRUE! - ALTHOUGH SURROUNDED BY WATER, FISH DO NOT DRINK
AND DO YOU KNOW IF FISH CAN SWIM? - - YES?- WELL HERE'S ONE THAT DOES NOT! - IT WALKS!
SOLDIER ANT
IS IT SIR, OR MADAM? - MADAM:- THERE ARE NO MALES IN THE ANT ARMY.

RIVALS OF THE SEA!



The black-bearded man was sent crashing to the floor.

A STIRRING TALE OF THE CHINA TEA CLIPPERS

★

By ERNEST GRAY

First Attempt

CAPTAIN George Parsons stepped out of the shipping agent's office and pulled his hat over his eyes against the glare of the sun. The dusty street was crowded with Chinamen, some of them rich merchants riding in rickshaws, others coolies passing to and fro from the waterfront. There were Lascars, negroes, and hardbitten Europeans dressed like Captain Parsons in white drill.

Over the roof-tops rose a spider's web of masts and rigging of the shipping riding on the mighty yellow flood of the Yangt-se river, which could be smelt, if not seen, as the wind blew fitfully shoreward. Captain Parsons, plunging into the crowd, made for an alley between two wooden houses with broad wooden eaves carved and painted with quaint dragons.

Then he came to an abrupt stop. Over the open door of one of the houses hung a tavern sign, and from within rose a sudden crash of glass, and loud cries. But riots near the waterfront were common enough; Captain Parsons had stopped because his late companion had suddenly vanished.

"Joe!" he roared, "Joe! where's that dratted boy got to now?" he muttered irritably.

Then he spied his sixteen-year old son hanging excitedly from the sill of one of the tavern windows. In two strides, Captain Parsons was behind him and shot out a broad brown fist to seize him by the collar.

"Come out of that, you varmint!" he growled.

Young Joe however resisted his father's tug.

"Dad!" he almost screamed "its Mr. Macrae, and there's two big chaps set on him!"

"My First Mate?" cried the Captain. "Here, let me have a look! If I know him, he'll handle a couple of fellers easily enough, provided they fight square."

He elbowed Joe out of the window, took one searching glance, then dropped to the ground and darted round to the door quicker than his son could follow.

"You keep out of this, my boy!" he threw back over his shoulder. "There's likely to be a nasty row and your mother'd never forgive me if you got hurt!"

"But who's Mr. Macrae fighting, dad?" Joe was dancing with impatience.

"Captain Enoch Syme, of the clipper *Black Joke* and his First Mate, Daniells! A pair o' snakes, both of 'em!" and the little square-built Captain rolled up his sleeves and burst into the tavern like an angry bull.

Mr. Ian Macrae, Captain Parson's First Mate, a tall bony man with fluffy red side-whiskers framing his narrow sandy features, was being hotly attacked by a black-bearded giant in rough seaman's dress and a fat man in prim black clothes flourishing a life-preserver. Joe, peering wide-eyed through the door, saw Mr. Macrae dodge a vicious swing from the life preserver, and deliver a pile-driver at the giant that sent him flying on his back on the floor. Mr. Macrae's cap had been knocked off, revealing his shock of red hair, and his eyes of cold ice blue glittered fiercely as he rounded on the fat man.

When Captain Parsons burst in, the black-bearded giant scrambled to his feet and rushed at him, to be met by a blow on the jaw that crashed him half-senseless to the floor again with a thud that shook the building. Whereupon the fat man hurriedly pocketed the life preserver in the skirts of his frock-coat, and turned a pale moon face framed in lank black hair on the newcomer.

"I don't know how you came to be with these swabs, Mister" said Captain Parsons breathlessly to his Mate. "But I hope you've learned your lesson and will be more particular in future!"

"I was no wi' them at all!" cried Mr. Macrae indignantly. "I was at peace wi' all the worrr-ld, when in they comes together and sits doon—wi'out askin' ma permission—at ma table. Then they begins talkin' aboot hoo' they'd gie us a fifty mile start on the homeward voyage, an' still be in Lunnon docks firr-st—provided we didna' play foul!"

"Your Mate's red hair, Captain Parsons, shows he has a hasty temper" interposed the fat man in a smooth, expressionless voice. "He is naturally a little upset at the moment, so you must not take any notice of what he says."

Captain Parsons ignored the interruption.

"What did they say next?" he asked the Mate.

"Whiles I feenished ma drink, yon black-bearded rogue" nodding at the giant on the floor "knocks it oot o' ma hand, saying I could pay for a fresh one oot o' the profit I'd make helping them. Bein' a leetle upset I gets to ma feet, whereupon he swipes at me wi' a bottle."

Captain Parsons nodded grimly.

"It's just what I would expect from you, Syme." He rounded on the fat man so suddenly that worthy started back nervously. "If you can't get your own way by fair means, you'll try it by foul. I wouldn't put it past you to have faked this fight, hoping to put my Mate in hospital so I'd be short-handed on the voyage home. Well, you haven't succeeded, and in two days we'll be slipping down river!"

"With my cargo of tea!" said the fat man with a snarl.

"I paid old Lao-Tse a fair price—the price he asked. If you had done the same the cargo would be yours now. But you chose to try and beat him down, hoping to get it a good bit cheaper. Lao-Tse told me himself! And then, when you got home you'd charge the owners the full rate and pocket the difference. I know your little games! You've no one but yourself to thank if you are delayed. Perhaps it'll teach you honesty does pay. Come along Mister!" He turned to the First Mate "We've work to do!"

Captain Parsons resumed his journey clutching his Mate firmly by one arm and Joe by the collar, afraid to let either of them go until the safety of his clipper barque, *Sabina*, was reached. As it was, Joe nearly caused another riot by grabbing at the pigtail of a Chinaman to see if it was real or only a dummy sewn onto the celestial's cap. His angry father boxed his ears and drove him on

Mr. Macrae observing with a dry chuckle "You'll no be sorry to get the laddie hame, Captain. Gosh! do you mind yon time he

tied a fire-cracker to cookie's apron and cookie nigh jumped in the sea wi' fright ? "

Captain Parsons nodded grimly. " However swift our voyage it'll be none too quick for me ! " he agreed.

Second Attempt

BACK in the tavern they had left, the fat man threw the contents of a jug of water in the face of the groaning black-bearded giant.

" Wake up, you fool " he hissed slapping the giant's face mercilessly. " Wake up ! " and as the giant rose unsteadily, thrust him into a chair and sat down at a table opposite.

" You great dumb ox," said the fat man viciously. " Why didn't you throw arms around Macrae as I told you and hang on till I stunned him ? Oh, stow your gab " he went on impatiently as the giant began mumbling excuses. " They've gone now, but we've got to stop them reaching London docks first. At all costs ! Remember we're in this together, sink or swim ! Now, we've got one chance. When Parsons sails, the shipping agent will send him down a Chinese pilot. We'll nobble him, and send a Chinaman of our own aboard ! "

Joe Parsons, the Captain's Son.

" But we aint got a Chink of our own, Cap'n Syme ! " protested the giant.

The fat man glared at him, then snatched up the jug again and threw the rest of its contents in his face.

" Listen, you muddy-brained oaf. Bill Davies in the fo'c'sle looks just like a Chinaman, which isn't surprising as his mother was Chinese. Bill comes from Wapping and talks Cockney, but these Chinese pilots learnt English from rough sailormen. If we dress Bill up and warn him not to open his mouth too wide, who's going to spot him ? "

The giant stared at him with a puzzled frown, then his lips twisted in an admiring leer.

" You're a deep un, Cap'n ! " he observed, wiping away the water dripping down his face.

" There's another thing too." The fat man glanced furtively round. " Parsons is short of a hand. I'll get Burgess to sign on the *Sabina*. He's been hanging about the beach for a month and Burgess will do anything for me since I happen to know things about him that would land him in jail."

At noon, two days later, Mr. Macrae

heaved a sigh of relief as chattering coolies lowered away the final chest of tea into the *Sabina's* hold. He issued a string of sharp orders, and under the watchful eye of Mr. Hocking, the Second Mate, the barque's crew gleefully began battening down hatch covers and clearing the deck.

" No more to come eh, Mister ? " Captain Parsons approached, throwing away the stub of his cheroot.

" No, sir. Yon's the last box of a good lot."

" I'll not deny it should fetch top prices in the markets " said Captain Parsons happily. " It's the best of this seasons' pick. Cast off when you are ready Mister. The pilot should be here any moment now—and—where's that dratted boy gone to now ? " He broke off and stared furiously round.

The Mate, a man of few words, nodded briefly at the mast above their heads. Silhouetted against the sky, Joe could be seen scrambling happily along the main-yard.

" Call him down at once, Mister ! " roared Captain Parsons. " If he breaks his neck his mother will be furious ! "

But a grinning seaman had to be sent to chase the adventurous Joe down, and at that moment a fat little Chinaman waddled over the gangway. He was dressed in a yellow robe, a black oiled straw-hat, and blue felt boots, and a long pigtail hung down his back. His appearance proved an irresistable magnet to Joe, who came swarming down the ratlines again.

" You the pilot ? " demanded Captain Parsons, and the little Chinaman bowed in assent. " The shipping agent send you, eh ? Got your papers ? "

With another bow the Chinaman produced a letter and a sheaf of torn testimonials out of his capacious sleeve. " Hum ! Seems to be in order ! " said Captain Parsons, scanning them. " Right, we'll take the ship out ourselves, but once in the river you'll take over. Savvy ? An' if you slip, I'll skin you alive ! "

" Me velly good pilot " protested the Chinaman in a quaint singsong Cockney accent. " Blest pilot in Yangt-se ! "

" You'll be blest if you aren't " growled Captain Parsons, walking away. Orders rang out, the crew of the *Sabina* ran to halliards and swarmed up the ratlines out onto the yards. As they cast off, the little Chinaman waddled up to the poop, closely shadowed by the fascinated Joe.

" Cast off ! " cried Mr. Macrae. " Loose fore tops'ls and jibs ! "

" Loose fore tops'ls and jibs ! " echoed the Second Mate.

They passed their rival, the famous *Black Joke*, swinging idly at her moorings. A lovely ship if of rather sinister beauty, with her lithe black hull picked out with gold, her black masts set at an acute rake, and her piles of furled, snowy canvas, with a patch on the flying jib.

Not that young Joe Parsons bothered. Ever since the old seaman in the fo'c'sle, known as the Old Un, had told him Chinamen grew pigtails so as to be hauled up to heaven by them when they died, they had fascinated him.

Now he was perched on a grating behind the binnacle, closely watching every move of the Chinese pilot who stood by the helmsman. The pilot's pigtail was the longest and thickest Joe had ever seen. He could hardly keep his fingers off it.

For an hour they flitted down the broad, muddy Yangt-se, a death-trap because of shifting shoals and mud-banks, dodging too, the clumsy, gaudy painted junks and fishing boats, each with a great painted eye in the bows, that drifted lazily here and there. Twice they had shaved mud-banks, escaping disaster by a hairsbreadth, and Captain Parsons was growing nervous.

" Send a man into the chains with a depth line, Mister ! " he snapped.

" Aye, aye, sir ! " returned Mr. Macrae.

As a brown-faced seaman ran up into the bows, the lead and its line looped round his arm, Joe's curiosity at last got the better of him. Tip-toeing up behind the pilot, he reached out a shaking hand, grasped the coveted pigtail and gave it a sharp tug. To his utter bewilderment, it came away in his fingers bringing the hat and a pink skull-cap with it !

At the same instant there was a frantic shout from the bows. " By the deep, twelve ! By the deep, five ! Shoal ahead ! "

Captain Syme, of the *Black Joke*

Captain Parsons, who was standing by the aft companionway, jumped as if he had been stung, leapt for the wheel, pushing aside the helmsman, and spun the wheel hard over. The " Chinese " pilot gave a yell and disappeared over the side as the *Sabina* gave a shudder and fell off, her sails slatting wildly against the yards. Black mud boiled under the bows, but fortunately she had missed running full aground. After some confusion, her journey was resumed, a fisherman being bribed to come aboard as unofficial pilot. Joe had fled in horror, though his father for once felt disposed to thank him.

By nightfall they were far below the worst of the shoals, and a fresh sea-breeze greeted them. There was some discussion in the fo'c'sle over supper as to the fate of the sham " pilot " for no trace had been seen of him after he went over-board.

" You mark my words," said a pasty-faced man gloomily. " There'll be a curse on the ship from now on ! It ain't 'ealthy to 'ave a man drowned right at the beginning of a voyage ! "

A ponderous bullet-headed Yorkshireman eyed the speaker with a cold reflective eye.

" Thy name'll be Burgess ? Signed on just afore we sailed ? "

" Yes. If it's any business of yours," growled the pasty-faced man, growing red under the Yorkshireman's prolonged stare.

" Aye ! Well, we don't like that sort o' talk in this fo'c'sle. Happen thee'll remember it in future."

A silence fell. The crew of the *Sabina* were in thorough agreement with the Yorkshireman, and felt the stranger had been put in his proper place. But meal times were too precious to be wasted in conversation. They continued to munch happily, until after a long pause that wrinkled ancient, the Old Un, piped up :

" Funny things do 'appen at sea sometimes ! I remember when I was aboard a Yankee brig., there was a ugly cross-eyed, pimply-faced slab aboard—he might 'ave been your brother, Burgess." He leered innocently at the new hand who scowled. " Name o' Oliver Pike," prattled on the Old Un. " Gave us all the fair 'orrors 'e did, shaking and shivering, no one liked to be on watch with 'im cos 'e stand and stare at the sea mutterin' to 'isself. We was all convinced e'd done some ghastly murder, but it turned out that on 'is last spell ashore 'e'd accidentally taken a bath, and 'e couldn't get over it nohow ! "

A roar of laughter greeted this yarn, though at the word murder Burgess had jumped up with a clatter and slammed out of the fo'c'sle.

" Bit 'asty, aint 'e ? " remarked Alf Bassett, who had round blue eyes like a kitten's. He stared at the companion ladder for a long time, then, at last, convinced Burgess had gone, shook his head heavily. " Left 'arf 'is grub, too." He lifted a generous helping onto his own plate with his clasp-knife. " Might be somethin' in wot 'e says, though." He sucked thoughtfully at his walrus moustache.

The Ocean Race

THE next day they passed out onto the China Sea, and the *Sabina* skimmed along like a swallow before a fresh breeze. The weather was perfect and cheerful

songs rose from the galley and fo'c'sle. Day drew into night, and stars came out in all their breathtaking splendour, and still the *Sabina* flew along, a gleam of phosphorescent water at her bows. Joe had dropped asleep in his cot in the corner of the stateroom, but woke to hear eight bells clanged on the ship's bell, and Mr. Hocking calling " Lay aft the watch ! " as the midnight watch was posted. Joe dropped off again as the rush of bare feet along the planking over his head died away, but sometime later was literally hurled awake as the *Sabina* suddenly heeled over to a violent angle. Startled cries rang out, and Captain Parsons burst out of his cabin pulling an oilskin over his nightshirt and rushed up on to the poop, Joe at his heels.

Mr. Macrae had already appeared, wearing only a pair of linen trousers, and stood by the wheel swinging the ship back on her course. The Second Mate, Mr. Hocking, was angrily shaking a sailor who knelt by the binnacle, eyes starting out of his head.

" Why did you let go of the wheel, you fool ? " Mr. Hocking was almost speechless with fury.

" I saw that Chinaman—that Chink pilot who was drowned—walk round the deck and into the galley ! O-oh ! " and the seaman covered his face with his hands and moaned in terror. " It's a ghost ! I saw a ghost ! "

" You stupid oaf, you were dreaming ! " cried Mr. Hocking, cuffing the man heartily.

" I'll send and have the ship sear-r-ched " observed Mr. Macrae. " Here, Matthew Clay." He beckoned to an elderly bearded sailor. " Tak' the wheel and think what ye're aboot ! "

" Search the ship from truck to keel, Mister " said Captain Parsons. " Carry on ! Now where's that boy of mine ? JOE ! Oh ! there you are ! Now Joe," his voice was grim. " Have you been up to any of your pranks, eh ? "

" No, dad," cried Joe, " I was in the stateroom when you ran through ! "

" Of course, said his father. I saw you. Well what happened to the cap and pigtail you pulled off that sham pilot ? "

Joe shook his head.

" I dunno, dad. When they came off, I was so scared you'd take a rope's-end to me, I just bolted. I haven't seen them since ! "

" They've got to be found " grunted the Captain, " So's that silly practical joker who I suppose was wearing 'em tonight. And when we do catch him, I'll make him sorry he was ever born ! "

A hurried search, however, failed to reveal any trace of the missing clothes or the " ghost." More time could not be given, for as dawn broke, the wind freshened to gale force, and the sky grew overcast with a green leaden sheen near the horizon. The First Mate, a pea-packet thrown over his red-haired torso, stood with Captain Parsons on the poop as a clumsy junk lurched by. Her skipper leant over the rail, shouting " Tai-fung ! Tai-fung ! " and pointed expressively to the leaden sky.

" Tai-fung, is it ? " rapped the little Captain, waving an arm in response. " The Chinese word for typhoon. Those chaps can smell a storm twenty miles off, though it's obvious dirty weather is blowing up ! Snug her down, Mister ! Take in some sheets ! "

" Aye, aye, sir " responded the Mate, and ran forward roaring " Make all fast aloft ! Reef fore and main tops'ls ! "

A sudden squall struck the barque, and with a deafening crack split the spanker, the great fore-and-aft sail on the mizzen, clean across. A foaming sea burst over the rail, washing Joe violently against the main-mast. Breathless, he dashed the stinging brine from his eyes, and with a confused idea of doing something to help the men swarming out on the yards, set foot to the ratlines. But an iron arm clamped round his waist.

" Not this time, lad ! " cried Mr. Macrae. " Your chance may come later ! "

All that day and for a week following, the gallant *Sabina* fought against the elements. Fierce hissing rain-storms drenched the toiling seamen, fierce gusts blowing from all points of the compass strained her spars and tossed her about like a cork.

The " ghost " made two more appearances near the galley, and on the morning following its last appearance the new hand, Burgess,

The First Mate had seized the wheel. The helmsman was terrified. "It's a ghost," he cried. "I saw a ghost!"

appeared on deck with two magnificent black eyes—the result of a heavy blow from the Yorkshireman, Sutcliffe, for "daft old-woman talk about dead men's curses." Yet despite the Yorkshireman's sturdy, intolerant, common-sense, a deep sense of foreboding crept into the fo'c'sle as they ploughed on, still attended by cross-seas and contrary winds.

The cook, a thin individual with a long nose and a sad expression, was so excited by the ghost continually appearing near his galley, he made an elaborate booby-trap out of a can of slush, two frying pans and a biscuit barrel. But the only "ghost" he bagged was the Old Un, who, sneaking in for a morsel of cheese, brought the whole lot roaring round his ears like thunder. His quavering yells of fury roused the whole ship.

Joe determined to make it his one aim to unmask the "ghost" but to his great disgust, lay prostrate for many days with sea-sickness —brought on, he was forced to admit, not so much by the rough weather, but by over-indulgence one night in a dish of "dandy funk," a mess of treacle and powdered ship's biscuit, of which he was especially fond.

On they sailed, and slowly drew across those treacherous waters towards the coast of Borneo. They beat through the Api passage, then with a steady south-west wind threaded

a cautious passage through the Thousand Isles. They were near Java Head when Joe came on deck one morning to find Mr. Macrae standing by the mizzen chains, staring astern through a telescope.

" Is a ship in sight, sir ? " he asked excitedly.

" Aye, lad," returned the Mate. His tone was grim. " A full rigged ship wi' a patch on her flying jib ! Run doon, will ye, lad, and tell y'r father ? I doubt he'll be interested ! "

A few moments later, the little Captain stood breathlessly beside Mr. Macrae.

" Don't tell me you've sighted the *Black Joke*, Mister ? " he gasped, bolting the crust he was chewing.

" There's nae doot o' it," said the Mate, handing over the telescope. " Hoo Cap'n Syme got a cargo, and slipped his moorings, sae quick, I dinna ken ! But he means to dock in Lunnon fir-r-st ! An' yon *Black Joke* is a flyer, especially close-hauled in these strong winds ! "

The news spread rapidly through the barque. Every man of the *Sabina's* crew spent his spare moments hanging over the rail, watching their rival rise steadily over the horizon and then swoop down upon them. It was the beginning of a race that became a legend and was long eagerly discussed wherever deep-water men gathered.

The *Sabina* was not at her best in strong winds, and the *Black Joke* closed in on her like a hovering hawk. By the late afternoon it was evident that the *Black Joke* would pass within a few yards of the struggling *Sabina* whose crew swarmed into the rigging and groaned and boo'd as the *Black Joke* snored by.

So magnificent a sight was she, however, heeling slightly to the wind, a fury of foam boiling at her cutwater, every sail drawing, that the barque's crew burst into an involuntary cheer. Her rail was lined by grinning faces, and Captain Syme called across through a speaking trumpet.

" Nasty weather for a freshwater sailor, Captain ! I hope you are not going far ? "

The Mate Daniells was busy at the flag-halliards, and as the *Black Joke* slashed by, a pair of ragged trousers broke from her jack and soared out on the gale.

" The insulting beggars ! " roared Captain Parsons, though he found it difficult not to smile.

" Sir, d'ye see yon ? " cried Mr. Macrae. " He's got padlocks on his sheets ! "

" He's crazy," snapped the little Captain.

" He's desperate ! " said the Mate drily.

" Why has he padlocked his sails ? " demanded Joe, watching the *Black Joke* draw away with starting eyes.

" So no one can take in canvas without his knowledge " replied his father. " Captain Syme is a nigger driver, though at the same time he's one of the finest sailors known ! "

That night the " ghost " made a third appearance, and disaster nearly befell the *Sabina*. For the startled man at the wheel let the spokes slip, and though he instantly recovered them, the barque fell off the wind, and lay helpless in deadly peril of the great seas whipped up to leeward.

Only magnificent seamanship averted the imminent disaster of those seas " pooping " the barque, bursting over the decks to send her, riven like a basket, to the bottom. Captain Parsons, struggling with Mr. Hocking, the Second Mate, to hold the wheel hard over, gasped : " It's lucky we've a good offing We'd be swept ashore otherwise."

Mr. Macrae loomed through the flying spray.

" Foretop mast is sprung, Cap'n ! I've been up to inspect it, and it'll carry nae mair weight ! "

" Brail up the foretops'l, then Mister, and back the main-yard ! " shouted Captain Parsons, casting a calculating glance at their wake. " We'll try to hold her steady while Chips (the carpenter) fixes a new fore-top ! Before you go, put this in your pocket," and he pushed a pistol into the Mate's fist. " Here's one for you too Mr. Hocking ! If either of you see that confounded " ghost " shoot it dead ! "

" I aye prefer my fists or a bit o' cold iron to guns " observed Mr. Macrae, thrusting the pistol into his pocket. " But a marlinspike fell out o' the clouds a while back, missin ma heid by the breadth o' twa fingers only, so I'll no deny this is comfortin' ! " and patting

his pocket, he disappeared, leaving Captain Parsons and his Second staring after him, open-mouthed.

They lost a day rigging the new foretop-mast, and another day bending a jib and mizzen tops'l badly frayed by the wind. A knife flew through the dusk hurled by an unseen hand and notched Sutcliffe's ear and tempers grew strained in the fo'c'sle.

" Oh, sir " cried Joe, desperately to Mr. Macrae, " We'll never overtake the *Black Joke* will we ? "

" Hoots, laddie " said the Mate with a chuckle " D'ye no ken that Sabina, the name of this tight little beauty," he smacked the rail affectionately, " is the name of a Roman matron ? She's a lady, ye ken, she can no stand bein' knocked and scurried aboot by these gales and rough seas. Wait till gentle breezes speak to her quietly—lovingly—then ye'll see her go ! "

Once more the breathless chase was resumed. The brig *Nancy* reported seeing them, pursuer and pursued, flying neck and neck to the Cape, the *Black Joke* leading, the *Sabina* gamely hanging on in her wake. Round the Cape they swept, and the passengers of a great liner rushed to the rail to cheer them.

Gales met them in the Atlantic which tore the flying jibs and top-gallants of the *Black Joke* from their gaskets. The *Sabina*, snugged down under a mizzen storm staysail, could not overtake her till with light westerly winds, she crept forward again. Joe cheered with the crew as, under light winds, useless to the *Black Joke*, the *Sabina* at last forged ahead and took the lead all the way to the Western Isles.

" Noo she's talkin ! " said Mr. Macrae proudly to Joe. " Remember I told you she was a lady ? Hark to the whisper in yon sails ! That's the language she loves ! "

In the Bay they met with fitful winds, but though Captain Syme savagely padlocked his sheets again—a most dangerous act in those tricky seas—the *Sabina* still held the lead ; indeed, she increased it.

One moon-lit, gusty night, Joe at last achieved his aim. Roused by a stealthy rustle in the stateroom, he poked his head out of his cot, to see a fat little figure creeping towards his father's cabin. He let out a terrified shriek, then hurled himself at the intruder. To his horror his fingers closed on a pig-tail, but he hung on gamely, shouting for help. He had not long to wait. His father, emerging from his cabin, took in the situation at one swift glance ; cried " leave him to me, Joe ! " and struck a heavy blow from the shoulder. Something tinkled to the floor, and the mysterious intruder collapsed, groaned and lay still.

" Fetch a light, Joe ! " snapped his father. Hurrying steps sounded on the companion-way.

" Are ye all richt, Captain ? " cried the Mate anxiously, entering with a lantern. " Gosh, what's this ? " He dropped to one knee beside the huddled figure of the " Chinese " pilot who had disappeared in the Yangt-se.

" It's the ghost, Joe's laid it for us at last," said the Captain. " Handle him softly. He carried a knife, and I'm afraid when I hit him, he dropped on it ! "

Captain Parsons, of the *Sabina*.

" But " began the Mate slowly " I dinna onderstand. Hoo did he get aboar-r-d again ? "

There was a sound of feet above and the voice of the Second Mate cried, " Oh, Captain ! Mr. Macrae ! Could you come up on deck at once ? "

Flanked by Sutcliffe, and the cook, who flourished a meat axe, stood Burgess the new hand. A silent ring of seamen watched him.

" Found 'im sneakin' in my galley, Cap'n " said the cook. " I've taken to sleeping there lately ! An afore 'e come in, I 'eard 'im telling someone to sneak into your cabin and finish yer ! "

Captain Parsons nodded.

" Thanks to Joe, that ' somebody ' didn't succeed. What have you got to say for yourself ? " he roared at Burgess.

" Oh, what's the use ? " burst out the new hand. "I can see Cap'n Syme won't be able to pay me wot 'e promised ! So I'll tell yer now—make a clean breast of it. Cap'n Syme sent me aboard, to 'elp Davies, who you says is down below. Davies dressed up as a Chink, but wasn't drowned when he went overside. He hung on under the counter and later, when you was all busy gettin' the ship off the mudbank, what he'd tried to pile yer on, I got 'im in through the stateroom windows. All this voyage he's been snugged away in the cable-locker, comin' out at night to sling knives and marlinspikes an pinch wot 'e could out o' the galley for food ! "

Captain Parsons stared at him for some seconds.

" How do you know Syme won't be able to pay you what he promised ? " he demanded.

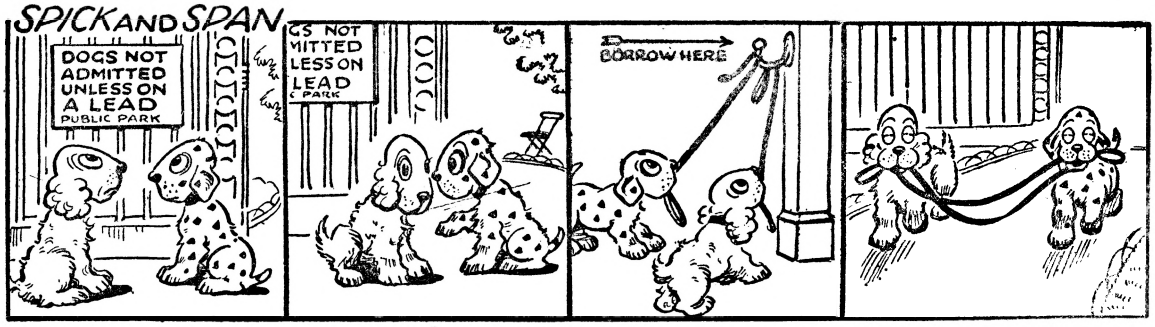
The First Mate touched him gently on the shoulder, and pointed far astern across the heaving waters glittering under the light of the moon. Revealed by its silvery sheen the *Black Joke* lay helpless, her main-top-mast lying drunkenly across her fore-mast. Rigging and stays were loose and twisted. Captain Syme had driven the sticks out of his ship. He had played his last card.

Two days later a light westerly breeze bore the *Sabina* up Channel to Dungeness. The waiting pilot brought off the owners who sailed with her to the docks. Her cargo of prime tea fetched excellent prices, and the owners were so delighted they presented Captain Parsons with a gold watch suitably inscribed, and a handsome cheque for distribution among officers and crew, at a dinner given in his honour. The dinner was held on the same day the wounded *Black Joke* limped into the Thames, to be met by a police launch. Captain Syme and his Mate, Daniells, were arrested and later they each received a long term of imprisonment.

Joe was present at the dinner given to his father. He found it very dull, although he did his best to liven things up by dropping a cutlet down the Head Waiter's neck. Far more to his taste was a supper party given in *his* honour as the " Ghost Catcher " aboard ship by the crew, at which he ate so lavishly of " dandy-funk " and " lobscouse "—a greasy stew of broken biscuits, potatoes and salt " horse "—that he was ill for a week, and his mother was so furious about it that, greatly to Captain Parson's relief, she declared Joe should never go to sea with him again.

But Joe had the sea in his blood and nothing could keep him on shore for very long. And it wasn't long before he had a heaving deck under his feet again, and the salty wind in his face—and he was happy.

THE END



MIKE

WELL, I'VE FINISHED BAKING, MIKE, AND I'M GOING SHOPPING NOW. YOU'LL BE A GOOD BOY WHILE I'M OUT, WON'T YOU?
OF COURSE, MUM, - YOU KNOW ME!
CHEERIO, MUM, SEE YOU LATER!
GOOD BYE, MIKE, I SHAN'T BE LONG!
OH BOY! - COULD I DO WITH ONE OF THOSE JAM TARTS MUM JUST MADE! YUM! YUM.
WELL, FANCY THAT! MUM DOESN'T TRUST ME!! - SHE'S LOCKED THE PANTRY DOOR!
PANTRY
I KNOW! I'LL GET THAT OLD BUNCH OF KEYS FROM THE ATTIC! - MAYBE ONE OF THEM WILL FIT!
BOTHER, NO GOOD! - I'VE TRIED THEM ALL! NOW I'LL TRY ALL THE OTHER KEYS IN THE HOUSE!
PANTRY
GUR! NO LUCK! - WHAT ELSE CAN I TRY NOW?
PANTRY
MAYBE A PIECE OF BENT WIRE LIKE THEY DO IN BOOKS . . . . . NO, NO GOOD!
PANTRY
BAH! FOILED! I'LL JUST HAVE TO SIT HERE AND STARVE!
GOSH, I CAN HEAR MUM COMING BACK! I'LL JUST HAVE TIME TO HIDE THE KEYS . . . . .
HELLO, MUM! ER, I'VE BEEN EVER SUCH A GOOD BOY WHILE YOU'VE BEEN OUT, - SO PLEASE CAN I HAVE A JAM TART?

SEXTON BLAKE and THE LOCH KYLE MONSTER

EARLY ONE MORNING, A SHEPHERD, ON THE SHORE OF LOCH KYLE, NOTICED A SERIES OF STRANGE RIPPLES ON THE WATER, AS IF SOME GIANT MONSTER SWAM BELOW THE SURFACE.

THE NEXT DAY, IN ALL THE PAPERS.....

JOURNAL
THE LOCH KYLE MONSTER

STRANGE MONSTER SEEN IN LOCH KYLE

DAILY WIRE
~ IS IT A ~ PREHISTORIC REPTILE?

Daily Ec
SCOTTISH MYSTERY

PRESS
THE SECRET OF LOCH KYLE

PICTUR
WHAT DID THE SHEPHERD SEE?

THEN THE NEWS WAS FORGOTTEN. A GREATER SENSATION HIT THE HEADLINES.. A PRICELESS MANUSCRIPT STOLEN FROM THE CHELSEA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

..A SMASH AND GRAB AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM...

..AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LORD BOULDER'S VALUABLE CHINESE VASE.

AND SEXTON BLAKE RECEIVES A TELEPHONE CALL.

SIR JAMES BLAGDON BART, BLAGDON HALL, INVERGARTH

VERY WELL, I'LL START AT ONCE!

INVERGARTH? CRUMBS, THAT'S NEAR LOCH KYLE!

AT BLAGDON HALL

THE PICTURE OF SIR EUSTACE BLAGDON IS AN OLD MASTER WORTH A FORTUNE, MR. BLAKE. SEVERAL TIMES A DAY A MAN WHO REFUSES HIS NAME, PHONES AND ASKS ME TO SELL, AND THREATENS WHEN I REFUSE. I AM AFRAID IT WILL BE STOLEN.

SO YOU ARE HAVING IT COPIED, INTENDING TO REMOVE THE ORIGINAL TO A SAFE PLACE? YOU HAVE LEFT IT RATHER LATE, SIR JAMES, BECAUSE THE ATTEMPT WILL BE MADE TONIGHT! HOWEVER I SHALL GUARD IT!

THAT EVENING.
I'M SORRY IF I'M LATE, SIR JAMES. THERE WERE A FEW FINAL ARRANGEMENTS I HAD TO MAKE FOR TONIGHT.
AFTER DINNER.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ARE SO SURE THAT AN ATTEMPT WILL BE MADE TONIGHT, MR. BLAKE. ARE YOU SENDING FOR THE POLICE?
I WILL EXPLAIN THINGS LATER, SIR JAMES. AS FOR THE POLICE.. I THINK I CAN MANAGE, MYSELF. TINKER AND I WILL SPEND THE NIGHT HERE.
NOW, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, TINKER?
LEAVE IT TO ME, GUV'NOR. BUT I WISH SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN. IT'S GETTING COLD.
AT THE MAIN SWITCH-BOARD!
WHAT THE DICKENS! WHERE'S MY TORCH?
LIGHT, TINKER! QUICKLY! THEY'RE GETTING AWAY WITH IT!
YOU BLUNDERER! THEY'VE GOT THE PICTURE! I'VE LOST....
YOU'VE LOST NOTHING! YOU'RE NOT SIR JAMES BLAQDON! I KNEW YOU WERE AN IMPOSTOR THE MOMENT I SET EYES ON YOU!
YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN SIR JAMES PHONED ME. I UPSET YOUR PLANS WHEN I TURNED UP, DIDN'T I? SO I GUESSED YOU'D TRY STEALING THE PICTURE TO-NIGHT!
YOU NEVER FOOLED ME! SIR JAMES IS A PERSONAL FRIEND OF MINE. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HIM?

CLEVER AREN'T YOU? BUT YOU WON'T LIVE TO TALK!
ANYBODY DOWN THERE? STOP THAT MAN!
THAT OPEN WINDOW BAULKED ME. I MUSTN'T LOSE HIM, NOW!

THE TREE BROKE HIS FALL. THE LUCK'S WITH HIM, FOR THE TIME BEING!
DON'T WASTE TIME BLOWING YOUR WHISTLE, MAN. GET TO A PHONE BOX! HAVE ALL ROADS WATCHED FOR HIM. NO USE GOING AFTER HIM ON FOOT. HURRY!
MY CAR! HE'S STOLEN IT!
BACK AT BLAGDON HALL.
THEY'VE GOT AWAY WITH THE OLD MASTER!
NEVER MIND THAT, FOR THE MOMENT. THE MAN WE DINED WITH TONIGHT WAS NOT SIR JAMES BLAGDON. WE MUST SEARCH THE HOUSE FOR THE REAL SIR JAMES. COME ON!
AND THEY FIND SIR JAMES IN THE CELLAR
THANK HEAVENS, YOU'VE COME, BLAKE. BUT I FEAR YOU ARE TOO LATE!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, NOW, SIR JAMES. WAIT TILL WE GET YOU OUT OF THIS.
THE PICTURE! GONE! THEY GOT AWAY WITH THE OLD MASTER, AFTER ALL!
I KNEW THE IMPOSTER HAD'NT EXPECTED ME TO ARRIVE AND I GUESSED HE WOULD HAVE TO MAKE THE ATTEMPT TO-NIGHT. I LET HIM DO IT BECAUSE I BELIEVE HE IS THE MAN WHO IS STEALING VALUABLE ANTIQUES ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.
I AM HOPING HE WILL LEAD ME TO A SOLUTION OF SEVERAL MYSTERIES. JUST BEFORE DINNER, I SWITCHED THE PICTURES. HIS CROOK PAL STOLE NOT THE OLD MASTER, BUT THE COPY, AND TINKER IS ON HIS TRAIL AT THIS MOMENT. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MASTER CROOK ESCAPED. BUT, WE'LL GET HIM!

TINKER ON THE TRAIL.
GOSH, HE'S TRAVELLING! NOPE HE DOESN'T KEEP UP THIS PACE FOR LONG!
CRUMBS! HE NEARLY SPOTTED ME, THAT TIME!
UNFORTUNATELY, THE MOON WAS SHINING!
MUSTN'T LOSE SIGHT OF HIM! BUT I WILL, WHEN HE DROPS DOWN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL!
WHERE'S HE GOT TO, NOW?
GOT HIM! HE WON'T SNOOP ANY MORE!

BUT TINKER WAS NOT HIT! HE HAD FLUNG HIMSELF FORWARD TO DODGE THE BULLET AND HALF STUNNED HIMSELF.
HULLO! HE'S GOT A PAL, NOW! HAS HE JUST MET HIM OR WAS THE PAL WAITING FOR HIM? AND WHERE DO THEY THINK THEY'RE OFF TO?
FUNNY! LOOKS AS IF THEY'RE GOING BEHIND THE ISLAND. AND I CAN'T FOLLOW THEM NOW. BETTER FIND THE GUV'NOR!
THE POLICE PHONE SEXTON BLAKE AT BLAGDON HALL.
CAR ABANDONED ON THE LOCH ROAD. THANK YOU, INSPECTOR, I'LL JOIN YOU THERE, RIGHT AWAY.
NOTHING VERY STARTLING HERE, MR. BLAKE!
HELLO, TINKER! WHAT HAPPENED?
THAT YOU GUV'NOR?
AND THEN I SAW HIM IN A BOAT WITH ANOTHER CHAP. THEY ROWED ACROSS AND WENT BEHIND THE ISLAND OVER THERE!
AND AT THAT MOMENT!
LOOK! THE MONSTER!

(continued on page 170)

BILLY BUNTER — THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH

EVERY BOY WILL ALLOW ME TO EXAMINE HIS HANDS AS I PASS DOWN EACH LINE!
WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?
YES, YOUR HANDS PASS MY INSPECTION, JONES MINOR. NOW—BUNTER!
THERE, SIR. MY HANDS ARE CLEAN—I'VE JUST WASHED 'EM! TEE! HEE!
I'M TOO JOLLY CLEVER FOR OLD QUELCHY!
H'M! VERY SUSPICIOUS— BUT I HAVE NO PROOF! I MUST NOW TRY OTHER WAYS!
ATTENTION! LET THE CULPRIT WHO ENTERED THE PANTRY AND CONSUMED A NUMBER OF CAKES— AND LEFT JAMMY FINGER MARKS ON THE TABLE— OWN UP— OTHERWISE NO HALF HOLIDAY THIS WEEK!

PLEASE SIR, I FOUND THIS BOW TIE OUTSIDE THE PANTRY DOOR! MAY WE HAVE OUR HALF HOLIDAY, SIR?
TO MY STUDY, BUNTER! THIS RIDICULOUS NECKWEAR SATISFIES ME THAT YOU ENTERED THE PANTRY!
O LOR! IT MUST BE SOME OTHER BOY—
H. QUELCH
PLEASE BUNTER - AGAIN YOUR GREED HAS CAUSED YOU PAIN! OUR HALF HOLIDAY WAS IN DANGER—
GUR! THAT SNEAKY LITTLE ROTTER, BROWN, GAVE ME AWAY TO QUELCHY! HE'S GOING TO SUFFER FOR THIS!
WILLIAM BUNTER NEVER FORGETS! BROWN SHALL SUFFER AND SUFFER— AND - AND - TO-NIGHT THE DEED SHALL BE DONE! PREPARE TO HELP ME, JONES MINOR!
MIDNIGHT AT GREYFRIARS
WHILE BROWN SLEEPS IN THE DORMITORY - WE ENTER HIS STUDY! FORWARD!

BUNTER PROCEEDS WITH HIS PLAN FOR REVENGE.
I KNOW THE WINDOW OF HIS STUDY! FOLLOW ME!
OW! PLEASE- LISTEN TO ME! OW!
SH! PREPARE FOR ACTION! NOW WE GET BUSY!
?
NOW GET BUSY AND WRECK THIS STUDY! TURN IT UPSIDE DOWN! SNEAKY BROWN SHALL SUFFER—
BUT PLEASE— YOU MUST LISTEN-
BUNTER! STAY YOUR HAND! SUCH FOLLY—
TEE! HEE! WHAT A WRECK THAT ROTTER WILL FIND IN THE MORNING! HE WILL NEVER SNEAK ON WILLIAM BUNTER AGAIN!
OH DEAR! LISTEN—
MY REVENGE IS COMPLETE! NOW WE CAN GO BACK TO BED, JONES MINOR!

NEXT MORNING
STUDY NO. 10
HEE! HEE!
STUDY NO. 9
YAH! YOU SNEAKY ROTTER! TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR BEASTLY STUDY!
NO. 12
TEE! HEE! HEE!
PLEASE- OH DEAR!
WELL, WILLIAM BUNTER- WHAT IS WRONG WITH MY STUDY?
EH? ER- OW!
I WRECKED HIS ROOM LAST NIGHT- HOW- WHY- WHAT'S HAPPENED?
PLEASE BUNTER- IF ONLY YOU HAD LISTENED TO ME-
O CRUMBS! MY STUDY!
YOU WOULD NOT LISTEN! I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU- IT WAS YOUR STUDY YOU WRECKED LAST NIGHT!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

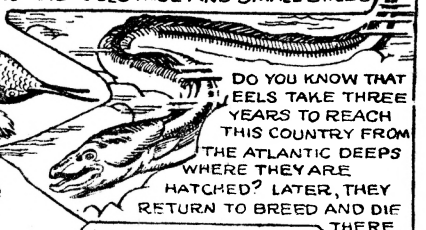
DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE MAGIC OF NUMBERS?

TRY THIS—

WRITE DOWN **ANY** NUMBER, SAY 157. MULTIPLY BY 3 (157 x 3 = 471). ADD 1 (471 + 1 = 472). MULTIPLY BY 9 (472 x 3 = 1416). ADD THE FIRST NUMBER WRITTEN DOWN (1416 + 157 = **1573**)

AND IT ALWAYS COMES TO THE ORIGINAL NUMBER FOLLOWED BY **3**!

THIS GIGANTIC SPIDER OF SOUTH AMERICA STALKS AND KILLS MICE AND SMALL BIRDS



DO YOU KNOW THAT EELS TAKE THREE YEARS TO REACH THIS COUNTRY FROM THE ATLANTIC DEEPS WHERE THEY ARE HATCHED? LATER, THEY RETURN TO BREED AND DIE THERE

NOW TRY THIS!

OPEN A BOOK AT **ANY** PAGE AND MARK **ANY** WORD IN THE FIRST 10 LINES AND IN THE LAST 10 WORDS OF THE LINE.

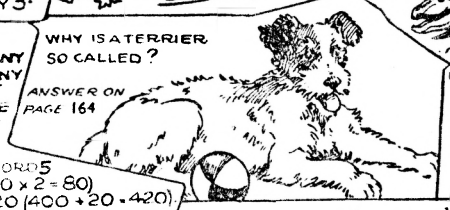
SAY PAGE **40**, LINE **6**, WORD **5**

DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF THE PAGE (40 x 2 = 80)
MULTIPLY BY 5 (80 x 5 = 400). ADD 20 (400 + 20 = 420)
ADD NUMBER OF THE LINE (420 + 6 = 426).
ADD 5 (426 + 5 = 431) MULTIPLY BY 10 (431 x 10 = 4310).
ADD NUMBER OF THE WORD (4310 + 5 = 4315).
DEDUCT 250 (4315 - 250 = **4065**).

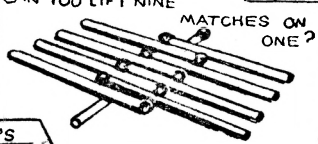
THIS GIVES THE PAGE (40), THE LINE (6), AND THE WORD (5)!

WHY IS A TERRIER SO CALLED?

ANSWER ON PAGE 164

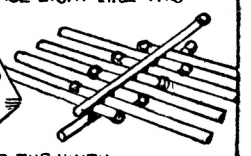


CAN YOU LIFT NINE MATCHES ON ONE?

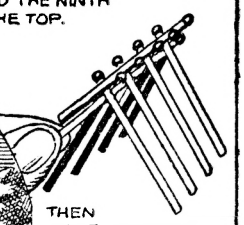


DO YOU KNOW THAT A SNAIL'S EYES ARE AT THE TIPS OF ITS "HORNS"?

PLACE EIGHT LIKE THIS –



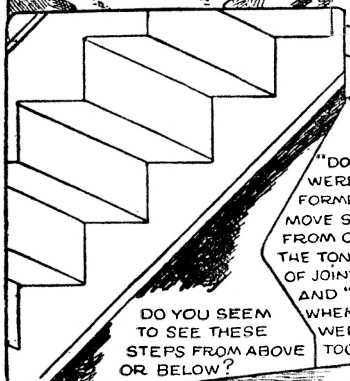
AND THE NINTH ON THE TOP.



THEN LIFT THE BOTTOM MATCH CAREFULLY.

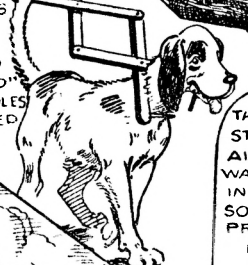
IS A GLACIER A FROZEN RIVER?

ANSWER ON PAGE 164

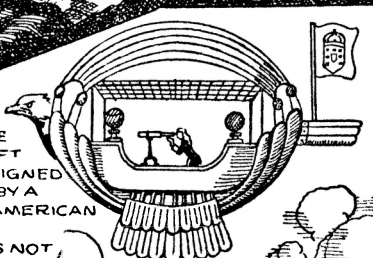


DO YOU SEEM TO SEE THESE STEPS FROM ABOVE OR BELOW?

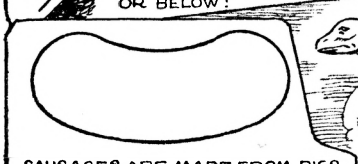
"DOG-TONGS" WERE USED, FORMERLY, TO MOVE STRAY DOGS FROM CHURCHES. THE TONGS WERE OF JOINTED WOOD AND "EXPANDED" WHEN THE HANDLES WERE PRESSED TOGETHER.



VOLCANO IS DERIVED FROM VULCANUS OR VULCAN, THE ROMAN GOD OF FIRE.

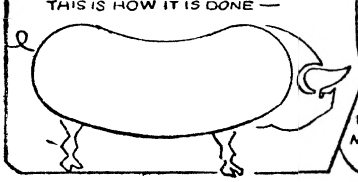


THIS STRANGE AIRCRAFT WAS DESIGNED IN 1709 BY A SOUTH AMERICAN PRIEST. IT WAS NOT A SUCCESS!



SAUSAGES ARE MADE FROM PIGS. CAN YOU, WITH FOUR LINES, MAKE A PIG OUT OF THIS SAUSAGE?

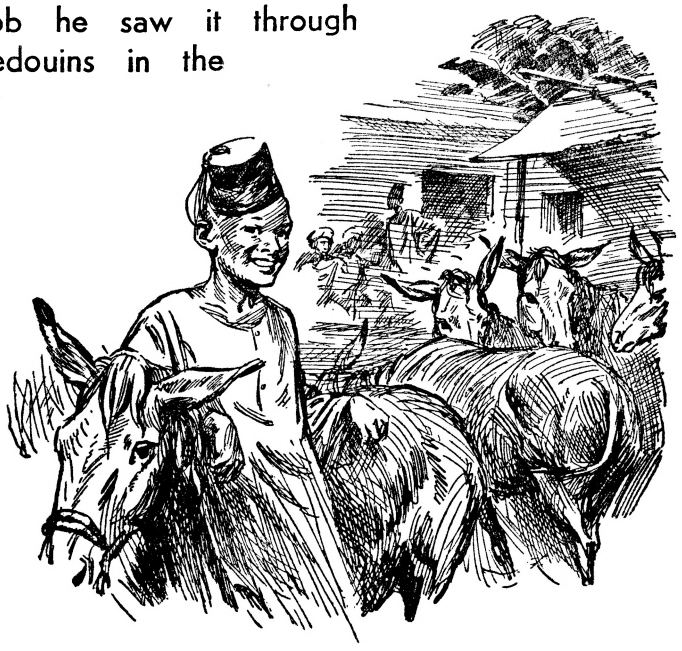
THIS IS HOW IT IS DONE —



THIS GIGANTIC REPTILE, CALLED THE "DIPLODOCUS," LIVED IN NORTH AMERICA MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO. IT WAS OVER 80 FEET LONG.

When Hassan took on a job he saw it through to the end, and all the Bedouins in the desert couldn't stop him!

HASSAN THE DONKEY BOY



A Rousing Story of Desert Thrills

By JOHN DENNIS

Hired!

THE sun beat down mercilessly through the shimmering heat-haze on the huddled, grey-white buildings that made up the little Arab town of El Basir. It beat down on the dusty market-place with its shouting traders and its jostling people—and it beat down on a rather small, dusky-faced lad who sat on an upturned box at the corner of a low building, his chin cupped in his hands, a picture of sorrow and woe. Behind him, looking almost as woe-begone, stood five donkeys, tethered to a stake which was driven into the ground beside him.

Hassan was usually the most cheerful and jolly lad in El Basir, always playing pranks on the merchants and the leader in every bit of mischief planned by the youngsters of the town. The donkeys belonged to his mother, and Hassan used to take them to the market every day to hire them to the merchants and traders who had bales of goods and merchandise to be carried to their encampments in the surrounding hills and desert.

Business had been quite good until, a few weeks before, two camel herders had arrived in the town and offered their camels for hire at rates which were almost as low as Hassan charged for his donkeys. Gradually his customers had drifted away, and now it seemed that no one would hire Hassan's donkeys while they could get the newly arrived camels.

Hassan had sat all day at his usual pitch and now it was already well into the afternoon and not a single customer had come his way. Hassan raised his bushy black eyebrows, thrust his shabby red tarbush further back on his head, and looked glumly across the street to where a loaded camel-caravan was setting out.

He reached up and patted the head of the nearest donkey.

"Simca," he whispered to his favourite animal, "'tis a sad day, for surely we shall have to sell you and your brothers if Allah does not smile upon us and send some customers our way."

And then, as if Allah had heard Hassan's words, something began to happen across the street which made the lad jump to his feet, his eyes bright with hope.

Two Englishmen had appeared,—one rather tall and middle-aged, the other, a youngster, little older than Hassan himself. They had dismounted from an old and heavily laden car and were now arguing heatedly with the chief of the camel herders.

The road ended at El Basir and travellers who wished to go further into the desert, had to depend solely on camels or, if the journey were not too long, on donkeys.

Now, as Hassan listened to the argument, he gathered that the Englishman and the boy, who, it seemed was his son, wished to go on to the camp of Sheikh Ali Ben Said, some forty miles away, and all the camels were out on hire.

That was the important bit to Hassan. *All the camels were out on hire !*

The older Englishman was getting cross and kept mopping his brow under his broad-brimmed topee, and Yusef, the camel herder, kept throwing out his arms and shrugging his narrow shoulders.

And Hassan, realising quickly that here was a golden opportunity sent directly by Allah himself, patted Simca joyfully on his broad back and, with a flashing grin, hurled himself across the street, and almost prostrated himself before the tall Englishman.

" Sir and master," gasped Hassan breathlessly to the astonished Englishman, " trouble not with this owner of flea-bitten and vile-smelling camels. I, Hassan, have the most beautiful team of donkeys in El Basir—fine, strong beasts that will transport you to the ends of the earth. Put yourself in my hands, sir and master, and I will deliver you, your excellent son, and your burdens to the Sheikh Ali Ben Said with the speed of the four winds ! "

The tall Englishman's look of surprise turned to one of amusement, and the tall, fair lad at his side chuckled loudly.

Mr. Graves and his son, Martin, were on a journey that mixed business with pleasure. He held an important post with the Anglo-Eastern Oil Company and when he planned to meet Sheikh Ali Ben Said to arrange the laying of an oil pipe through his territory, he had decided to bring his son, Martin, with him to show him the country.

Still volubly praising the virtues of his donkeys, Hassan turned and led the way across the street to where his animals were tethered. Mr. Graves and Martin followed somewhat dubiously.

"Are you sure your donkeys will carry us ? " asked Mr. Graves with a frown. " I am a heavy man and we have a good deal of baggage."

But Hassan waved these protests aside as if they presented no problem at all.

" The big white lord shall ride upon my own Simca, the finest donkey in the whole land. We shall be away within the hour and before tomorrow's sun sets, my most excellent sirs and masters shall be within the encampment of the great Sheikh Ali Ben Said."

Young Martin nodded eagerly and seized his father's arm. He had taken a great liking to Hassan and if a whole string of camels had appeared, he would not have changed them for Hassan's donkeys.

" Come on, dad ! " he said. " Let's go with Hassan and his mokes. It'll be fun—and save us waiting perhaps two days for the camels."

So it was agreed. The baggage was unloaded from the car and while Mr. Graves made arrangements for the vehicle to be garaged until his return, Martin helped Hassan load the bags and equipment on to the donkeys.

Martin was amazed at the speed and skill with which the young Arab boy whipped the cases into position and dexterously held them firmly in place with a rapid twist of the long ropes. And all the time he worked, Hassan never stopped talking, telling the eager English boy the exciting and, it is feared, often imaginary, adventures that were his daily lot. By the time Mr. Graves returned, the two were fast friends.

There were still more than two hours of daylight as the little caravan of five donkeys, with Hassan riding proudly at its head, wound its way out of the little town and headed into the sandy wastes of the desert. Some of the fierce heat had gone out of the sun and the donkeys seemed glad to be on the move, plodding along at quite a brisk pace. Hassan had planned to camp for the night at a small oasis some twelve miles from the town and it was for this they were making.

It was as they were about to leave the last of the buildings behind, that a curious thing happened. An Arab mounted on a white steed, came spurring over a sandy ridge. He pulled up suddenly on seeing the caravan and for a moment stood very still watching them. Then, wheeling his horse, he set off back the

way he had come at a furious gallop.

Mr. Graves paid little attention, but Hassan's smile vanished abruptly and his dark brow creased in a frown. He had recognised the horseman as one of the riders of the tribe of Sheikh Abu Selim and he knew that Abu Selim was a bad man, and his men not above falling upon a lonely caravan and plundering it. He decided there was little to be gained by alarming his clients. His little caravan did not suggest a great prize such as might attract Abu Selim, but he made up his mind to keep a very sharp look-out.

Lost Customers

FOR all Hassan's good intentions, disaster almost overtook the little party within a few hours of its setting out from El Basir. As darkness fell, they sighted the little oasis, just a water hole surrounded by a few rather tired looking palm trees, and Hassan announced that they would camp there for the night. The oasis was situated in a slight hollow and therefore offered some shelter should a sand storm suddenly spring up—a thing which might happen any time with very little warning.

The donkeys were hobbled and fed and Martin thoroughly enjoyed helping Hassan with his jobs. A fire was lit and some food prepared. When they were all seated round the camp fire eating their meal, Mr. Graves looked round with a smile.

"Well," he said. "This may not be the fastest or the most comfortable way of travelling, but I must say this is very good fun."

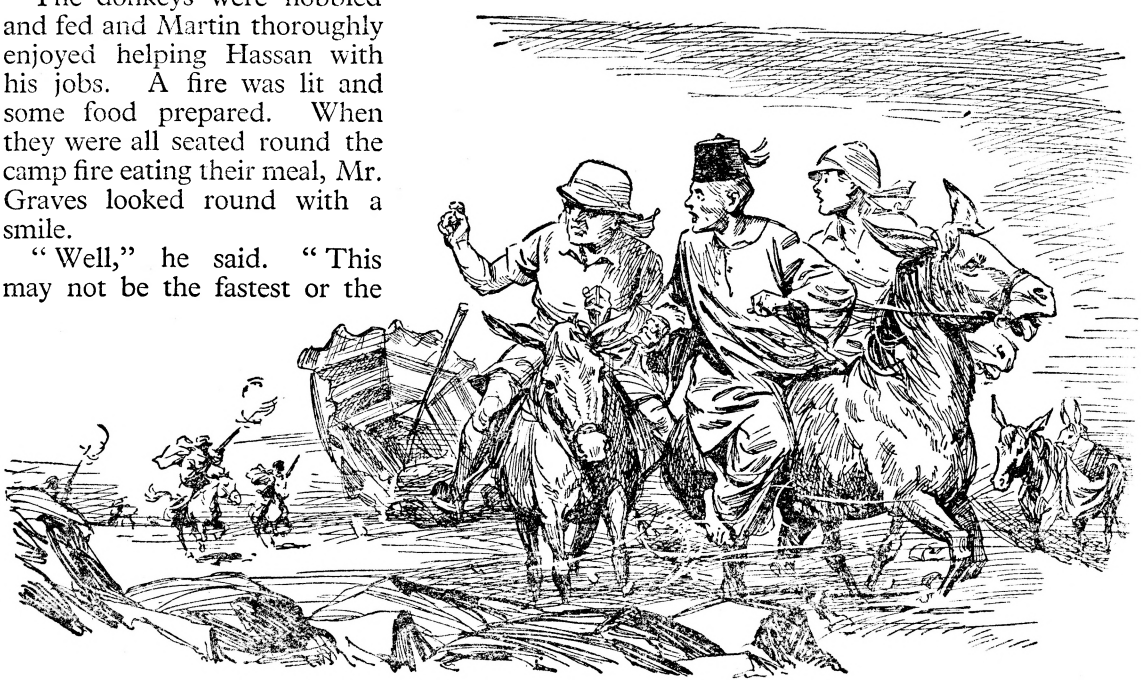
"Rather," chuckled Martin. "I wonder if we should do any good with donkey touring parties in England when we get home!"

Laughing and chatting, they settled down for the night, and as the embers of the fire died, so Martin and his father slept. Hassan lay back and thought of that ominous rider he had seen and decided that he must keep awake and watch out for any sign of danger.

For nearly an hour his watch was kept diligently enough, and all was quiet. Only the slight sound of the wind in the palm tops and the restless movements of the donkeys disturbed the night. And then Hassan's eyelids drooped. Once—twice—and then he, too, slept.

All remained quiet for nearly another hour. Then, over the edge of the nearest sand hill appeared a bearded face. For a moment, a pair of glittering eyes watched the moon-lit scene in the oasis below, then a brown arm was waved in a beckoning gesture.

A dozen more faces appeared and the stealthy figures of the Bedouins, stole forward until they were within a few yards of the three sleeping figures. Then, with a sudden



The Bedouin's bullet whipped the gaudy umbrella from Mr. Grave's hand.

cry, they leapt up and dashed forward.

Hassan jumped to his feet yelling out a warning and both Mr. Graves and Martin, startled to wakefulness, sprang up also. Mr. Graves lashed out a terrific punch at the leading Bedouin, sending him reeling back. He leapt back as a second came at him, his long knife gleaming in the moonlight.

" Run, Martin ! " he gasped. But Martin was no coward. At school he had been a good forward at Rugger, and now he dived at the legs of the nearest Arab, bringing off a flying tackle that would have made his sports master beam with pleasure. Down went the Arab with Martin on top of him and the two rolled, struggling furiously in the sand.

Hassan, when he jumped up, had seized his long whip which he used to crack over the heads of his donkeys to urge them on, and with this he laid about him desperately. But it was obvious that they would soon be overpowered by weight of numbers and he sought wildly for a way out.

Suddenly, he broke off the fight and dashed away into the shadows of the trees. Once there, he pulled out an old police whistle which had long been a treasured possession since it was given him by an Arab Legion sergeant, and blew several shrill blasts upon it. He ran forward yelling——

" Charge ! Forward the Legion ! " He beat the end of his whip among the cooking pots and cans, yelling and shouting and generally making as much noise as he could. The donkeys joined in braying and snorting, and the whole effect on what had been a still night, was quite terrifying.

To the attacking Arabs, it seemed as if they had run straight into a trap. With yells of fear, they turned and fled at full speed over the sand hills. As Hassan eased up on the racket he was making, he could hear the Arabs mounting their horses and riding off helter skelter into the night.

Martin and Mr. Graves, brushed the sand and battle stains from them and turned with relief on the grinning Hassan.

" Why you even had me fooled for a moment, Hassan," said Mr. Graves, smiling. " That was a brilliant idea of yours—and I think we have to thank you for possibly saving our lives."

" Gosh, Hassan," gasped Martin. " However did you think of it ? You certainly fooled me as much as you fooled those thugs. But why did they attack us ? We haven't got anything worth stealing."

Mr. Graves frowned for a moment. " They seemed to make a dead set at me," he said, thoughtfully. " I wonder if someone doesn't want me to reach Sheikh Ali Ben Said. I don't think we'd better sleep again to-night, and we'll move off at first light of dawn."

They kicked the dying embers of the fire into life and added some fuel. They brewed some tea and watchfully waited for the morning light.

They were not attacked again that night, and as the darkness faded before the rising sun, they packed up their camp, made the donkeys ready, and drove off across the sand hills leaving the oasis behind them. For mile after mile they pressed on, and the sun rose higher into the heavens, its rays beating down on them in increasing waves of heat.

Hassan whistled cheerfully, for this was a life he knew and liked well enough, but both Mr. Graves and Martin who until now had at least had the hood of the car to protect them from the sun, now began to find its heat almost unbearable.

" Phew ! " grumbled the older man wiping his brow with a large handkerchief. " I never thought I'd want to use a sunshade, but I certainly could do with one now ! "

Hassan leapt from his donkey at once.

" English sir want sunshade ? " he chuckled. " I have ! Hassan have every comfort for his patrons." And to the astonished eyes of both Mr. Graves and his son, Hassan rummaged into the pack on the back of one of the donkeys, and then stood up triumphantly waving a pair of brilliantly striped red, green and yellow golf umbrellas.

Goodness knows where he had got them, but somehow from the mysterious depths of the bazaar, he had found them and foreseen their possible use. Now, he strode forward and with a deep bow, proudly presented one each to both Martin and his father.

" Wonderful ! " laughed Mr. Graves. "Hassan, you're an amazing lad, 'pon my soul ! " And turning half round in the saddle

of his donkey, he opened the umbrella with a flourish.

It was probably that sudden movement that saved his life. For at that same instant, there was the crack of a rifle shot from beyond a nearby sand-dune and a bullet striking the brass ferrule of the umbrella, ricochetted off with a whining screech, at the same time, whipping the gaudy umbrella from Mr. Graves' hand.

"What the deuce—" he gasped, and then he and Martin leapt from their donkeys with a cry, as a troop of some twenty Bedouins, waving their rifles in the air and shouting wildly, came charging over the brow of the nearest hill towards them.

Resistance was useless. Hassan's party was unarmed and in a moment the bandits had formed themselves in a ring about them, their rifles pointing at them menacingly. One who was obviously their leader, urged his horse forward. His thin, cruel lips were twisted in a sneer.

"You are Graves effendi," he snarled. "You and your brat will come with us. The great Sheikh Abu Selim orders that you shall be brought before him—alive, if you behave—dead, if you do not. Come!"

Simca put his muzzle down close to Hassan's face.

Hassan, furious at losing his customers like this, both because he liked them and also because they had not yet paid him, stepped forward. He shook his fist angrily at the bandit leader.

"I know you, Akbar, son of an over-fed pig! Leave my worthy English clients and sirs in peace, or by the Prophet's Beard, I will fetch the Arab Legion warriors to wipe you and your rat-bitten master, Abu Selim, from the face of the desert!"

The leader, Akbar, urged his horse over to where Hassan stood. Without a word he swung his rifle so that its butt crashed down on Hassan's head. It happened so quickly, that the lad had not a chance to defend himself, and with only a faint gasp of pain he sank limply to the ground.

Akbar laughed brutally and spun to level his weapon at Martin who had made an instinctive movement towards him.

"Do not be foolish, my young friend," he snapped. "This whelp will play no more stupid tricks and you will gain nothing by useless heroics."

He turned to his men.

"Bind the prisoners and put them on the spare horses. Then let us begone!"

One of the bandits waved an arm towards the donkeys.

"What of these beasts, O Akbar?"

The leader shrugged. "Leave them," he said. "Some caravan will find them—or they will feed the vultures."

And so Martin and Mr. Graves were bound and bundled, helpless, upon two spare horses which were brought up. And as they rode off, Martin looked back. Hassan's still and apparently lifeless body lay sprawled on the sand. He had taken a deep liking to the gallant little donkey boy, but now he could only hope that he would be granted a chance to avenge him.

His father, too, looked grim and stern as he rode along beside Martin.

"Keep your chin up, lad," he said. "We're in a tough spot but we're not finished yet!"

So the Bedouins rode off with their prisoners and presently disappeared beyond the sand hills. And behind them, the donkeys moved with uneasy instinct towards the still form of their master.

It was Hassan's favourite donkey, Simca, which ambled forward and put his muzzle down to the Arab boy's pale face. He pawed

the ground and blew lustily through his nostrils, shaking his shaggy head as if urging his master not to lie about all day, but to get up and do something. Perhaps Simca's breath had a reviving effect, but at any rate, after a moment, Hassan's eyelids flickered and he moaned softly. Then he rolled over and his eyes opened wide.

For a minute he stared dully at the blue arch of sky above him, then he closed his eyes again as he became aware of a pain like a thousand striking hammers pounding in his head. But, gradually, that eased and presently he sat up. Suddenly his eyes opened again with a jerk and he looked round him wildly.

Like a flash it all came back to him. The attack,—the evil Akbar,—that blow on the head. First, he was glad to see his donkeys were safe, but his heart sank to the depths as he realised that his late clients, Martin and Mr. Graves, had vanished with the Bedouin raiders.

Hassan's Gift !

As his strength began to flow back into his limbs, Hassan felt a great rage boil up inside him. Akbar, the black dog, had stolen his customers. He had not earned any money for days and he was blowed if he was going to let Akbar, or even the Sheikh Abu Selim himself, do him out of this great chance which Allah had given him. Besides, he was rather surprised to find that he had developed a real liking for the young white effendi.

Hassan scrambled to his feet—and again the hammers started beating in his brain. But they passed off and he realised that he would have to get moving if he were going to have any chance at all of rescuing the Graves.

There was little that the donkey-boy's keen eyes and ears had missed in the market of El Basir, and he knew well enough where Sheikh Abu Selim had made his camp. He knew the country like the back of his hand and as he thought on the position of the camp he realised it was going to be difficult to approach.

He remembered that it was near the edge of a wadi—or dried up river-bed—and the site of one of the great battles which had been fought between the British forces and German Afrika Corps during the last war. Perhaps, he thought, if he could steal along the wadi, and remain unseen, he might, at least, get within a quarter of a mile of the camp. At any rate, he must push on and hope that Allah would help him.

Mounting Simca, Hassan gathered up the reins of the other donkeys and joined them so that he could lead them in a string, and he set off across the desert in the tracks which Akbar and his bandits had left earlier.

The distance was long and it was evening as he approached the wadi. He knew Abu Selim would have guards out. In a sheltered dip in the ground he left the donkeys safely secured and continued on his way on foot.

The wadi was a small one, but its banks offered him some shelter. As he neared the camp, he moved with the silence of a hunting animal. When he knew he must be at a point nearest to the camp site, he pressed himself to the bank and cautiously raised his head.

The change from day to night is rapid in this part of the world, but there was still sufficient light for him to see some distance about him.

The camp lay directly ahead. He had judged his timing perfectly and his dark eyes glittered as he saw the great, ungainly black tents spread untidily about a central camp fire. There were other lesser fires and the glow of lights within the tents flickered uncertainly in the fast deepening dusk. He could see the guards posted about the camp—indeed, there was one leaning on his rifle not more than thirty yards from where he stood. His chances of getting into the camp—let alone finding the prisoners and getting them out—seemed slim indeed.

And then his searching eyes suddenly lighted upon something else—something which sent a surge of hope through him.

The armies which had battled on that sandy plain had left their marks behind and not all of them had been removed. Stripped and derelict lorries, tanks and other engines of war still remained half buried in the sand. And it was such an object that caught Hassan's eyes now.

Not thirty yards away to his left was a battered and forlorn looking Sherman tank. Its tracks had been blown off, possibly from a land mine, and a shell had hit its turret, so that it looked a wreck indeed. But it was undoubtedly a tank and, what was important to Hassan, it offered good cover in his approach to the camp.

Hassan crouched in the shadow of the old tank— and then the sentry turned !

He crept further along the wadi so as to get the tank between him and the guard, then he slid over the edge of the bank and writhed his way through the sand towards it. He reached it safely and, panting, crouched in its shadow. He could see the guard now, and suddenly his heart leapt as the fellow turned abruptly and started walking towards him.

If Hassan stayed where he was he would, almost certainly, be spotted. But where could he go ? He looked up and saw that the entry into the tank through the turret was open. Also he realised that the tank was tipped over at such an angle that he could not be seen. Quick as a flash, he climbed up and dropped through the opening into the blackness below. Something hard and sharp grazed his shin as he dropped, but he bit his lips and kept silent.

Motionless, he waited anxiously as he heard the sentry reach the tank and from the brief sound realised he had leaned his rifle against its rusty side. Then there was a brief flare of light and Hassan realised there was a great gash inside of the tank and that beyond it, the sentry was trying to light a cigarette. Suddenly the light went out and there was a small sound as of something dropping, then a string of mumbled curses.

The sentry had dropped the matches and could not find them. A shout came from the direction of the camp and with another curse the sentry gave up his search, seized his rifle and shuffled off.

Hassan remained motionless for a few minutes, then he moved towards the spot where he had seen the gap, cautiously feeling his way. By the last flicker of the sentry's match, he had seen the match box fall through the hole in the tank and though it was not pitch dark his fingers groped about the sand-strewn floor searching eagerly. At first he could feel only sand, then his hand struck a sharp edge and the shape of something which he recognised as a large metal box. He could even feel the lid move slightly to his touch.

Then his other hand found the matches. For a moment he forgot the box in his pleasure at finding the matches. Dare he strike a light ? The gash in the side of the tank was not large enough for him to get through and he doubted if he could find his way outside again without the help of a light, for it was now quite dark.

He decided to take a chance and eased a match from the box. He shielded the flame as much as he could, but as he turned towards

the turret, his eyes were suddenly drawn to the box which his groping fingers had encountered a moment before. He brushed away the sand and though the metal was rusty beneath he could just make out the roughly painted words ' Verey Pistol.' There were other markings, but they were lost beneath the rust.

Hassan's brain clicked suddenly and as a thought sped through his mind, the flame of the match burnt his fingers, so that he dropped it with a gasp. Verey Pistol! Where had he heard that name before? For a moment he could not think—and then suddenly he remembered the British Officer who had come to El Basir and shewn him exciting war pictures, told him thrilling stories and explained how star-like lights were shot into the air as signals—from Verey pistols.

With that flood of memory, Hassan lit another match and fumbled with the lid of the rusty metal box. After a struggle, he forced it up and sure enough, inside, was a clumsy looking pistol such as the officer had described. He found a box of oblong objects, too, which he knew must be the cartridges.

So delighted was he with his find, that for a moment it did not occur to him that he had yet to find a way in which it might be of use to him.

Puzzling over this, he struck another match and sought to load the pistol—an effort which took several attempts and several matches. But it was just as this job was completed, that he suddenly saw something else hung on the side of the tank near his head. It was a funnel shaped object, narrow at one end and wide at the other and from the pictures he had seen, Hassan recognised it as a megophone—used by officers for giving orders that would be loud enough to be heard over a distance or above the noise of battle. It was this discovery that gave him his big idea.

Sheikh Abu Selim, Hassan knew, had always been a man of the desert and though he occasionally ventured into the cities and knew something of the civilised world, his tribe were tent-dwellers and simple if ruthless riders of the more remote parts of the desert. They were superstitious, too.

It was this last point which Hassan determined to put to his own advantage. Gathering up the pistol, the cartridges and the megaphone, he scrambled out of the tank. As he had guessed, with darkness, the sentries had been called in closer to the camp and for the moment he was safe.

As well as he could, he checked his pistol. Of course, it might not work. Obviously it had been left behind, unnoticed, when the tank was abandoned, and had lain there for a long time. True the fact that it had been in the box had preserved it to a great degree, but there was rust about it. And then the cartridges might be useless after all this time. However, he must take a chance.

Grasping his treasures, he stole as near to the camp as he dared and took up a position over-looking the tents but with some shelter from a sand hill.

Then, commending himself to Allah, he put the megaphone to his lips and drew in a deep lung-full of the night air.

Next moment a great bellow shattered the stillness of the desert—

" Rogues and thieves of the desert," roared the voice. " You have dared harm the white friends of the djinns and spirits of this land! As a punishment, balls of fire shall descend upon you and burn you and your tribe from the face of the earth! "

And with his last words, Hassan pointed the Verey pistol into the air over the camp and pressed the trigger. There was the thud of an explosion, a hissing whirr and next moment a great red ball of light exploded high over the camp.

Cries and yells of terror came from the tents. Hassan fired the red, green and white balls over the camp, so that the night was turned to a multi-coloured blaze of light, and the dazzling balls of fire hung and drifted above the tents. The bandits ran screaming from their tents, their families, too, and flinging themselves on their camels and horses, fled as fast as the animals could be driven.

Seizing his moment, Hassan leapt to his feet and dashed forward towards the camp. As he reached the tents, he saw Abu Selim himself dancing with rage and calling in vain for his tribesmen to come back. He alone knew what these apparently terrifying balls of fire were, but he was powerless. He did not even see Hassan as the lad raced up behind him, reversed his pistol, and brought it down

on the back of his head. The Sheikh dropped without another sound.

Hassan did not pause, but ran on among the tents calling out Martin's name. An answering cry soon took him to a tent where both Mr. Graves and Martin were bound, and it took but a moment for him to free them.

They dashed outside and finding there were still several camels and horses left in the camp, they took three of the horses and galloped off in the opposite direction to the fleeing tribesmen.

foreign interests to try and prevent me from signing the agreement with the Great Sheikh Ali Ben Said which will allow a great oil pipe line to be carried to the West—and but for you, he might have succeeded. As a reward, I have arranged for you to receive a gift of 20 camels and the Sheikh here has agreed that you alone shall carry his merchandise. You will now have the most important caravan business in El Basir ! "

Hassan's teeth gleamed in a broad grin of pleasure.

A blaze of light hung in the sky over the tents and the bandits fled in terror.

" Good old Hassan ! " yelled Martin as they raced through the darkness. " Gosh—the old Arabian Nights wizards had nothing on you ! "

* * * *

The following day, safely in the camp of the Sheikh Ali Ben Said, Hassan was called into the tent of the great Sheikh himself. Mr. Graves and Martin were there and all were smiling broadly.

" Hassan," said Mr. Graves, " we have learned that Abu Selim had been paid by

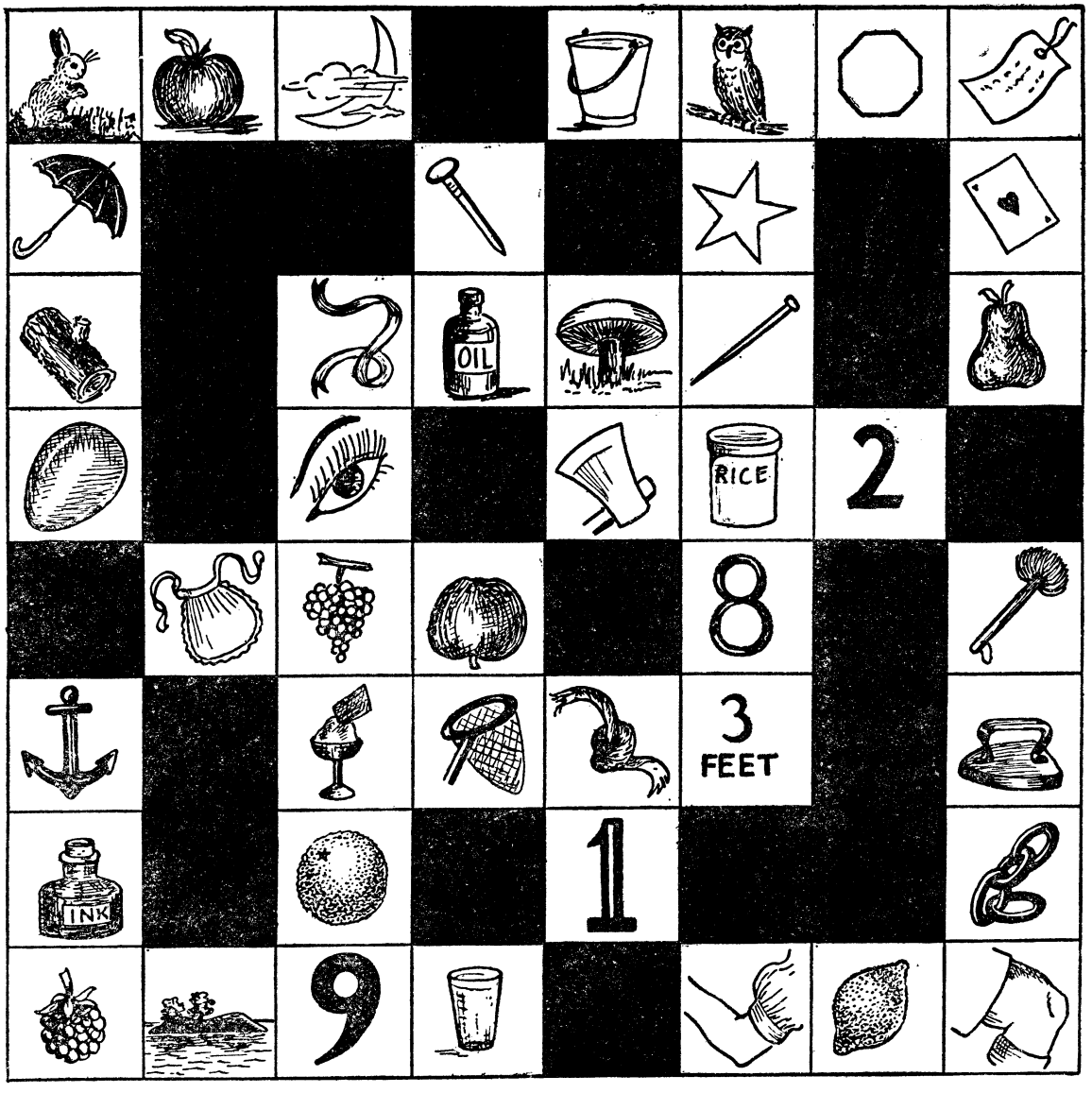
" Great Sheikh and English sirs," he said, bowing low. " That is indeed wonderful news, but always I will lead my caravan on my faithful Simca. The other donkeys, however, I give to my friend Martin effendi—to start his donkey caravan of which he spoke in England. And may he prosper greatly."

Martin's jaw dropped as he looked at his father.

" Oh gosh ! " he gasped.

THE END

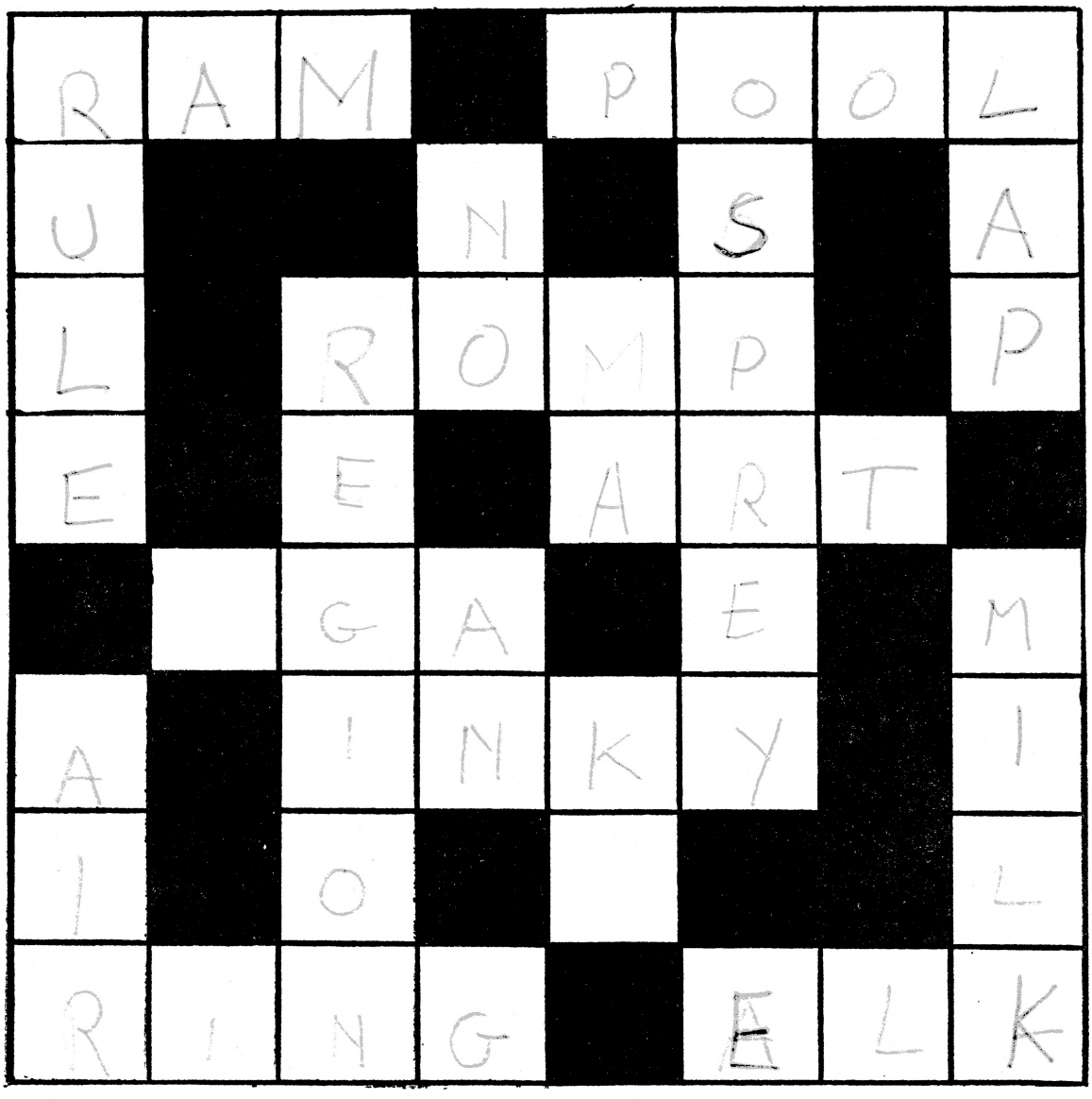
OUR PICTORIAL



WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

IN most Crossword Puzzles you have clues from which you have to discover the words that run across and down the puzzle. This one is different. In the puzzle on this page you will find a picture in every square. Each picture is a clue—not to the words, but to the letter which you must place in the corresponding square in the blank puzzle on the opposite page.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SOLVE THE PUZZLE HERE

STUDY the pictures in the puzzle on the opposite page, and then put down in the same square on the blank form above the FIRST LETTER of what the picture represents. For instance, the first word across is RAM, made from the FIRST LETTERS of R(abbit), A(pple), M(oon). Fill in all the blank squares in this way to solve the puzzle.

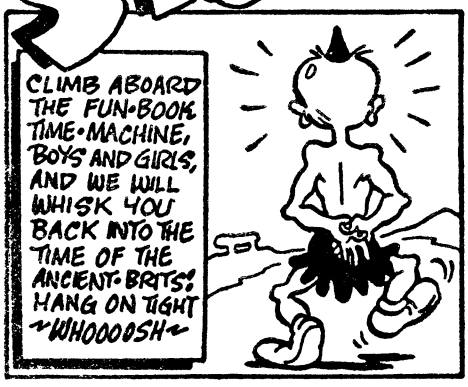
You will find the correct solution on Page 169.

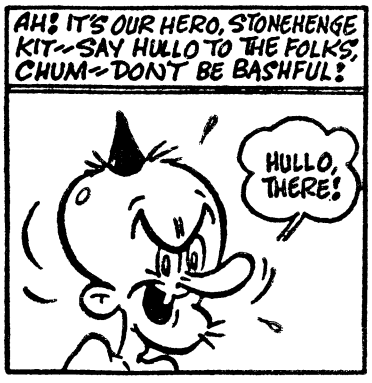
MIKE

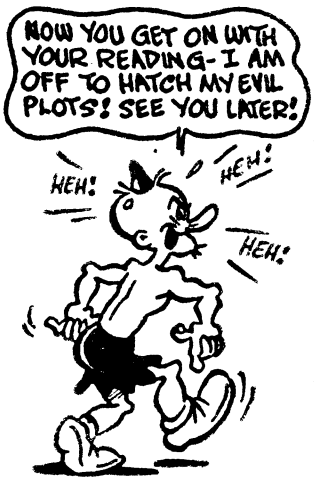
I'M SURE I SAW IT SOMEWHERE ABOUT HERE!
HUH! THERE'S YOUNG MIKE CRAWLING ABOUT IN THE GARDEN GETTING HIMSELF ALL GRUBBY AS USUAL! — AND I BET WHEN HE COMES IN HE WON'T WASH HIMSELF UNLESS I TELL HIM TO....
AHA! GOT IT!
17
WELL, FANCY THAT! WONDERS WILL NEVER CEASE! MIKE'S COME IN AND GONE STRAIGHT UP TO THE BATHROOM.... GOSH, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, MOTHER!!
YES, I CAN HEAR THE BATH WATER RUNNING! — I'LL POP UP AND TELL HIM WHAT A GOOD BOY HE IS!
GOOD BOY, MIKE! — NOW DON'T FORGET TO WASH BEHIND THE JOLLY OLD EARS! HA-HA-HA!
BATH
DON'T BE SILLY, DAD! — FROGS HAVEN'T GOT EARS!!!
ROAK!

STONEHENGE KIT

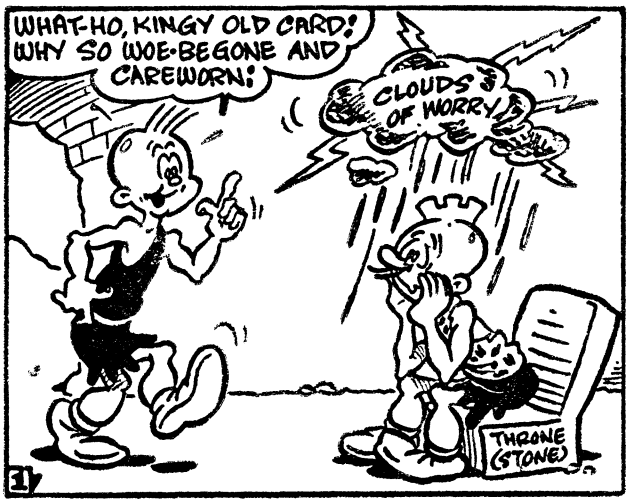
BY DENIS GIFFORD


CLIMB ABOARD THE FUN-BOOK TIME-MACHINE, BOYS AND GIRLS, AND WE WILL WHISK YOU BACK INTO THE TIME OF THE ANCIENT BRITS! HANG ON TIGHT ~WHOOOOSH~





HM! WONDER WHAT THE OLD GEEZER'S UP TO? O WELL, TO RESUME~HA! HERE IS OUR HERO AT LAST! MEET KIT, PALS!
TRA LA-LA
POM POM!
ETC.
TO KONGO KOURT



CALM DOWN, KINGY- NOW THEN, WHAT IS ALL THIS ABOUT A CRIME WAVE? TELL KIT ALL ABOUT IT!
SNIF
BEEP
IT'S SCANDALOUS, KIT- STONEHENGE IS IN THE FIENDISH CLUTCHES OF A DASTARDLY MASTER CRIMINAL- A CAD WHO WILL STOP AT NOTHING- NO-ONE IS SAFE- ALL ARE AT HIS MERCY! WHO KNOWS WHERE THIS EVIL GENIUS WILL STRIKE AGAIN!
WRATH
RAGE
PROPER VEXED
GOLLY- THIS IS AWFUL, KINGY- WHAT HAS THIS TERRIBLE CROOK DONE?
PICKED MY POCKET AND PINCHED MY PACKET OF PEPPERMINTS!
WOW! SUCH NERVE! TCH-TCH! GOODNESS! INCREDIBLE! I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT! THE FOUL FELLOW!
O, KIT! HELP ME! HELP STONEHENGE! FIND THE CULPRIT! BRING THE CROOK TO JUSTICE! O, DO, DO, DO!
YAY!
WHOOPEE!
C'MON, FELLOWS!
OO, LOOK!
WHOOPEE!
?
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY ALL THE CHEERS?
WAIT FOR ME!
DOCTOR McDOOFER IS IN TOWN!
THE MEDICINE SHOW'S IN TOWN!
HOORAY!
BOY!
DOCTOR McDOOFER'S MEDICINE SHOW? THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE MUCH FUN, DOES IT? BUT KINGY AND KIT ARE JOINING IN THE JOYFUL RUSH, TOO! HEY, THERE, CHUMS- WHAT'S SO EXCITING ABOUT A MEDICINE SHOW?
WHY, IT'S FUN FOR US FOLKS— DON'T FORGET— MOVIES HAVEN'T BEEN INVENTED YET!
TO THE SHOW- NEXT PAGE!
2.

SO THIS CHARACTER IS DOCTOR MCDOOFER — HMM! HE LOOKS A LITTLE FAMILIAR, DOESN'T HE, CHUMS?
STEP RIGHT UP, FOLKS — DON'T BE BASHFUL — MEET OLD DOC MCDOOFER'S PATENT 'SPIRIT OF YOUTH' — GOOD FOR WHATEVER AILS YOU, FOLKS — WARTS — FALLEN ARCHES — COLDS — FLATFEET — PIMPLES — HANGNAILS — DISTEMPER, ETC!
CHRONIC TONIC SELLS
YOU, SIR, IN THE FRONT ROW — I SEE YOU HAVE TROUBLE WITH YOUR BREATHING — DRINK ONE BOTTLE OF THIS, SIR, AND IT WILL STOP IT COMPLETELY!
PUF
PUF
PUF
CHRONIC TONIC SELLS
HM!
YESSIR! I'VE SOLD MY 'SPIRIT OF YOUTH', MAN AND BOY, FOR THE LAST NINETY YEARS, AND NO BODY HAS EVER COMPLAINED! WHAT DOES THAT PROVE, MY FRIENDS?
DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES!
CHRONIC TONIC SELLS
HEE HEE!
AS KING OF THIS HERE DUMP-ER-STONEHENGE, I MUST TELL YOU TO CLEAR OFF! WE'VE NO FAITH IN YOUR MESSY OLD MIX-UP!
NO?
NO!
GUESS WHAT?
SIRE, I APPEAL TO YOU TO LET ME PROVE TO YOU, IN A SIMPLE EXPERIMENT, THAT MY MESSY OLD MIX-UP — I MEAN — 'SPIRIT OF YOUTH', REALLY WORKS!
HM — WELL — ER —
YOU CAN'T REFUSE HIM THAT, KINGY!
NO
NO
NO
NO
NO
NOW, I REQUIRE AN ASSISTANT FROM MY AUDIENCE — SOMEONE WHO IS FEARLESS, INTELLIGENT, ALERT, COURAGEOUS —
ER —

KIT IS THE VERY MAN, AREN'T YOU KIT?
EH?
SPLENDID-JUST AS I PLANNED-I MEAN, SPLENDID-THIS WAY!
NOW YOU FOLKS BEAR IN MIND THE WEAK, SCRAWNY, UNDER-NOURISHED FIGURE THAT WAS STONEHENGE KIT-- WE'LL BE BACK IN A FLASH!
SAUCE!
GA-DONK!
DUH-SHALL I BOP HIM AGAIN, BOSS, HUH, HUH?
BRIT BASHER No.1
HEH-HEH! WELL DONE, SLAVE! YOU STAND GUARD OVER HIM WHILST I PRESS ON WITH MY DEVILISH DEVICES!
HOR! HOR!
NOW THEN, BRIT-BASHER No.2- YOU PUT ON KIT'S CLOTHES, AND I WILL DISGUISE YOU! QUICKLY, CLOT!
YUK! YUK!
YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE, GENTS-ALL! STONEHENGE KIT, A WEEDY LAD AS YOU KNOW, HAS GUZZLED A FULL FLAGON OF 'SPIRIT OF YOUTH'-NOW, HERE, BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES, HE WILL EMERGE IN ALL HIS NEW-FOUND, MUSCLE-BOUND MIGHT!
OO!
WHAT'S THIS FOUR?
TA-RAH!
HIYA, FOLKS-FEAST YOUR PEEPERS ON ME! I OWE IT ALL TO DOC M'DOOFER'S 'SPIRIT OF YOUTH'!
MY!
EGAD!
KIT!

YES INDEED FOLKS- NOW THINK WHAT MY 'SPIRIT OF YOUTH' COULD DO FOR YOU- ONLY FOURPENCE A BOTTLE! ONLY SIX BOTTLES PER PERSON! GET 'EM WHILE THEY LAST!
BANG GOES ME LIFE SAVINGS!
ONLY SIX PER PERSON?! TOO BAD- I WANTED HALF-A-DOZEN!
HURRY ALONG NOW FOLKS- ONLY A FEW BOTTLES LEFT- BUY 'EM NOW IF YOU WANT TO LOOK LIKE KIT!
BOY!
THAT REMINDS US! LET'S LOOK IN ON KIT!
KIT'S COMING ROUND! ANOTHER KLUNK ON THE CRANIUM IS IN ORDER!
EEK!
MOUSES!
MUM!
I'M OFF!
YELL!
SCREECH!
?
ICK?
COO- I'M ALL OF A DIZZY TIZWOZ- HALLO! WHO IS THIS MUSCULAR MAN?
EXIT
WELL I NEVER! IT'S ME! BY GUM! I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS SUCH A TOUGH-GUY! FANCY!
HALLO- WHAT'S THIS?
WHIZZY THE WIZARD'S DISTORTING MIRROR — PENNY A PEEP
5

MY GOODNESS! KINGY'S PEPPERMINTS! DOC McDOOFER MUST BE THE CROOK! I'LL SHOW HIM A THING OR TWO, NOW I KNOW I'M TOUGH!
PENNY PACKET
HOT STUFF PEPPERMINTS
ALL 'OT
MAKE WAY FOR STONEHENGE KIT THE SUPERBRIT!
POW
TCHAH! KIT'S ESCAPED!
FOLKS-DOC McDOOFER IS THE MASTER CROOK-HE'S SWINDLED YOU ALL!
GRR
GRRR!
GRR
GRR
LOOK! HE'S NOT EVEN DOC. McDOOFER-HE'S WHIZZY!
KIT-YOU HAVE SAVED STONEHENGE FROM THE CLUTCHES OF A DESPERATE DASTARD, AND YOU MAY HAVE ONE OF MY PEPPERMINTS FOR YOUR TROUBLE-BUT WHERE DID YOU GET ALL YOUR SUDDEN STRENGTH FROM?
ALL AGOG!
WHY—
—WHEN I SAW WHAT A TOUGH GUY I AM IN THE MIRROR, I WASN'T SCARED OF ANYTHING ANY MORE!
WHY, YOU BIG SILLY-IT'S A TRICK DISTORTING MIRROR!
SOPPY HA'PO'TH!
6.
IS THERE A DOCTOR READING THIS FUN-BOOK-KIT'S FAINTED!
OOOOOO
THAT'S ALL, FOLKS!

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SILVER CLAW

A Gripping Story of Amazing Courage

By JOHN HASLAR

The Attack

LONG, long ago before the white man invaded the vast Indian Territory of North America, an Indian lad sat in the stillness of the night beside a camp fire. His name was Silver Claw.

He was feeling very important because Dull Knife, the majestic Chieftain of the Cheyenne tribe, had ordered him to sit up all night to watch over the horses.

Silver Claw was fully aware of the responsibility of his task and his heart beat with pride at the knowledge that the great chief considered him worthy enough to guard the ponies.

He was the son of Sub-Chief White Bear, and was eleven years old, tall for his age, and well-built. He had alert brown eyes and straight raven hair which grew to his shoulders. He wore no clothing on his bronzed body except a breech-clout and beaded moccasins.

As the cool night wind whistled softly through the trees, Silver Claw wrapped a buffalo robe closely round him and sat staring into the embers of the fire. He was thinking of the events of the last few days and the reason for his nightly vigil.

For many years the Cheyenne had lived peaceably within their extensive tribal boundaries which covered sections of wooden forests and great open plains.

While the squaws worked hard tilling the soil, preparing the food and looking after their families, the boys and young men were taught by the warriors to build birch-bark canoes; to hunt deer, moose, caribou and bison; to shoot wild ducks and geese, and to fish at night from their canoes by the light of torches.

They played games with deerskin balls and crude rackets. They had foot races and wrestling. They swam in the wide rivers and

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they learned to ride as soon as they could walk. They broke in wild ponies which came down from the hills, and each had his own mount.

But the young braves were happiest when being taught to throw a tomahawk, to shoot an arrow, to use a scalp knife and a spiked club, and to handle a lance while on horseback. Although the tribe lived peaceably the young men longed to don the tribal war-bonnets and fight as their warrior fathers had done in the past.

The peace of this pleasant life was suddenly shattered by a band of marauding Sioux who wanted a section of the Cheyenne's fertile lands.

Dull Knife and his warriors repulsed the raiders and drove them off the encampment. But now life on the camp had changed.

The braves put away their games and spent all their time practising the art of fighting, mounted and on foot. Each brave and warrior had been allotted a specific task, and Silver Claw's job was to see the Sioux didn't return in the darkness and steal the ponies.

Although he was proud to help, he sighed a little as he realized he could no longer go swimming and riding with White Dove, the little Indian Princess, daughter of Dull Knife. No longer could he prove to her his skill with his bow and arrow, and hunting knife.

Suddenly Silver Claw's thoughts were interrupted by a stealthy movement near at hand. He sat motionless, listening intently. His sharp ears caught another muffled sound.

Slipping off the buffalo robe he began to crawl cautiously in the direction from which it came. He hesitated, his eyes piercing the darkness. He detected the faint outline of two feathers.

" Sioux ! " he gasped.

But before he could cry out a warning he was suddenly ambushed from behind by another Sioux scout who had been hiding in the bushes.

A piece of deer hide was roughly tied across Silver Claw's mouth. He was pulled violently to his feet, dragged hurriedly over to a tree and tied up. As he struggled, the tight rope cut cruelly into his wrists.

The silence of the night was shattered by the ferocious Sioux war-cries. Arrows twanged sharply as they left the raiders' bow-strings and whistled through the air, sticking into the sides of the tepees. The Cheyenne's mustangs let out frightened squeals as the Sioux broke into the corral and stampeded them.

Scalp knives, spiked clubs and tomahawks flashed in the dim light of the fires as the

warriors of both tribes clashed in combat, their shrill war-whoops renting the air.

Soon the invaders were driven off and the Cheyenne braves rounded up their ponies and tried to quieten them.

While the skirmish was going on Silver Claw tried desperately to untie his bonds, and as the last Sioux fled out of the encampment he managed to free his hands and tear the gag from his mouth.

He dashed over to Dull Knife and began to explain what had happened when the Chief glared at him with angry eyes.

" Silver Claw, son of White Bear, you are in disgrace. You let the Sioux come into our camp. You let them stampede horses. Chief Dull Knife is much displeased. Silver Claw is only fit to gather sticks for squaws' fires. Go ! Dull Knife does not wish to rest his eyes upon one who has failed in his duty."

The lad's heart was heavy at the Chief's harsh words. He turned abruptly away.

" Oh why didn't the Chief let me explain ? " he muttered to himself. " Now my father also will be angry."

Just then a warrior rushed past him and tore over to Dull Knife shouting :

" Chief Dull Knife, White Dove has gone ! The Sioux stole her from her tepee."

" The Sioux dogs shall pay dearly for this " thundered the Chieftain. " Dull Knife would hold council of war. Call my sub-Chiefs and Spotted Tail, the Medicine Man."

An arrow, with a message attached to it, stuck quivering in the ground at the feet of Dull Knife !

Dull Knife, his Medicine Man and his sub-Chiefs sat cross-legged in a circle round a fire. In an outer circle sat the warriors, and behind them, the young braves. Their faces which had been hastily smeared with war paint looked grotesque in the flickering firelight.

Spotted Tail sat with a war drum on his lap. At a given signal from the Chieftain, during a certain stage of the pow-wow, he would beat the drum, and the rhythm would be taken up by the braves who held their war drums in readiness.

Silver Claw crept up unseen to the outer circle of braves. He wanted to hear what Dull Knife had to say.

The Chief sat upright, his back straight as an arrow. His magnificent plumed head-dress fell trailing to the ground. The tribal pipe of battle lay beside him. When the council of war ended the pipe would be smoked by everyone present.

He had just raised his right hand and was about to address the council when an Indian on horseback tore up to the encampment at a terrific speed.

It was a Sioux messenger.

Quick as a flash an arrow left his bow and stuck upright in the ground at Dull Knife's feet. He whirled and raced away into the darkness.

The Cheyenne Chief pulled the arrow out of the ground and saw a message was attached to it.

Slowly he read it aloud.

" Red Feather, Chief of the Sioux, sends greeting to Dull Knife, Chief of the Cheyenne. White Dove, daughter of Dull Knife will die on night of next full moon unless my people are given part of the Cheyenne's hunting grounds."

Silver Claw didn't wait to hear any more. He ran silently over to where the ponies were coralled and whistled quietly to his black mustang, Magpie, who instantly came running up to him.

Jumping on its back the boy rode out of the encampment, in the direction the Sioux messenger had gone.

He was determined to save the Princess single-handed from the hands of the enemy.

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The Rescue

SILVER CLAW rode swiftly. Although he knew every inch of the trail, he had never ridden alone at night before, and that night was the longest he had ever spent.

He was grim and tense, knowing full well that he had undertaken a man's task.

He gave a quick jerk on the reins as a sound, seemingly sharp as a clap of thunder, startled him. It was only a stone which Magpie's hooves had sent hurling into a gully.

As he dashed along in the darkness a shrill scream of a mountain lion pierced the stillness of the night and sent shivers up and down his spine. He grasped the hilt of a knife which he carried at his waist and kept a sharp look-out for the great cat.

Now and again his heart pounded furiously as he saw two bright, shining eyes of some animal watching him.

Silver Claw awoke at dawn and there, to the north, he saw a spiral of smoke rising into the sky.

He urged his pony on at a greater speed. And then the moon came out and that made things even more eerie.

To Silver Claw the over-hanging branches of the trees seemed to turn into long sinewy arms which reached out towards him. Some of the branches appeared to be holding tomahawks and bows and arrows ; the leaves resembled feathered headdresses. But he knew it was only his imagination. The Indian boy gave a grateful sigh of relief, however, as dawn finally broke. He found himself at the edge of a swiftly flowing river. Magpie plunged in the cold, clear water and waded across to the opposite bank.

Silver Claw dismounted and looked about for the tracks of the Sioux messenger. He knew the Indian had travelled south because the Cheyenne scouts had followed the Sioux after they made their first attack on Dull Knife's camp, but once across the river he wasn't sure which way the messenger had gone.

As the boy looked closely at the moss-covered trail he saw the faint imprint of a mustang's hoof, pointing east. Then another, followed by several more. Whistling to Magpie he jumped on its back and set off in the direction of the rising sun.

He rode on steadily for several hours. He'd left the wooded country and the mountain passes behind him, and had come to the wide open plains. He had completely lost the track by now.

Silver Claw realized he would have to rest his horse for a while otherwise Magpie would be too exhausted to do the return journey. So finding a sheltered spot between two gigantic boulders they rested for a few hours.

The little Indian woke up with a jerk. He glanced up at the sun and guessed it must be late afternoon. He had slept longer than he had intended. Away to the north he saw a spiral of smoke rising into the sky. Mounting his pony he set off again in the direction where he had seen smoke. It was just the help he needed, and told him where to find the treacherous Sioux.

It was dusk when he came to a wide gully. He climbed down into it, and up the other side. Before reaching the top he got off Magpie and cautiously crawled to the ridge.

There below him in a similar gully was the Sioux's camp. The dying rays of the setting sun fell across the gaudily painted wigwams. A brightly coloured carved totem pole stood beside the biggest tepee which Silver Claw thought must belong to Chief Red Feather.

Silver Claw crept to the ridge and gazed down into the valley.

A great deal of activity was going on. A big fire was being built in the centre of the camp. Around smaller fires the squaws were busily cooking buffalo and deer meat over spits.

The warriors and braves were smearing their faces and bodies with sacred medicine war paint. They were putting on war-bonnets and gaily coloured war-shirts on which were painted the tribal emblems of battle.

Silver Claw saw no sign of White Dove, the little Princess, but he guessed she was in one of the tepees.

He decided to lay low until dark. He suspected the Sioux were preparing for a ceremonial war-dance.

He did not have long to wait. As soon as darkness fell the pounding of war drums told him the ceremony was about to commence.

The warriors taking part in the dance were grouping themselves round the fire. Each man wore two pairs of enormous brightly coloured earrings made of bone and metal—one pair was attached to each ear, at the tip and the lobe. They all wore crude necklets of birds' claws and teeth.

The leader carried a war banner made of eagle feathers sewed on a strip of cloth and fastened to a pole. Some warriors clutched lances and tomahawks, while others had spears, knives, bows and arrows.

The Medicine Man wore a hideous mask which represented some supernatural being he claimed he had seen in a dream.

The mask was painted black. It had enormous round red and white eyes ; a great gaping orange and green oblong mouth ; a huge square-shaped nose, bright blue in colour, and a pair of vivid yellow horns sticking out at the top. Across the forehead and cheeks, thick horizontal lines were painted in white.

To frighten the evil spirits away he carried a large rattle made of turtle shells, and a thick wooden club which had odd-shaped pieces of metal tied to it.

Red Feather and his sub-Chiefs sat on a raised dais to the right of his tepee. The rest of his warriors and braves sat in a circle round the dancers, while the squaws huddled together a few yards away from them.

A sudden movement near Red Feather's tepee caught Silver Claw's eye. He let out an excited gasp as he saw White Dove being led past the Chief. She was pulled along roughly by two braves who tied her to the totem pole, and left her.

White Dove gazed on the scene before her with apprehensive eyes. She was sure the Sioux intended to kill her. Her tense face was streaked with dirt. Her black hair fell in two matted plaits down her back. The single feather she wore in her headband—denoting she was a princess—had been broken off. She might have been terrified but she was far too proud to show it !

The little princess looked down at her beautiful white doeskin tunic. It was soiled and torn, with half its coloured beaded fringe

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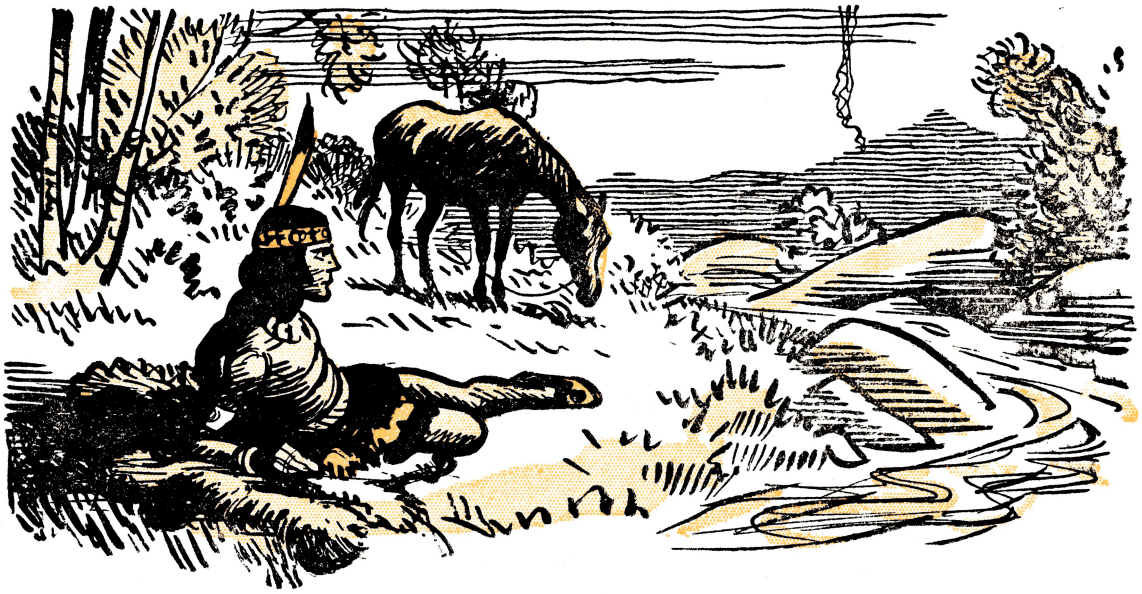

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A great deal of activity was going on. A big fire was being built in the centre of the camp. Around smaller fires the squaws were busily cooking buffalo and deer meat over spits.

The warriors and braves were smearing their faces and bodies with sacred medicine war paint. They were putting on war-bonnets and gaily coloured war-shirts on which were painted the tribal emblems of battle.

Silver Claw saw no sign of White Dove, the little Princess, but he guessed she was in one of the tepees.

He decided to lay low until dark. He suspected the Sioux were preparing for a ceremonial war-dance.

He did not have long to wait. As soon as darkness fell the pounding of war drums told him the ceremony was about to commence.

The warriors taking part in the dance were grouping themselves round the fire. Each man wore two pairs of enormous brightly coloured earrings made of bone and metal—one pair was attached to each ear, at the tip and the lobe. They all wore crude necklets of birds' claws and teeth.

The leader carried a war banner made of eagle feathers sewed on a strip of cloth and fastened to a pole. Some warriors clutched lances and tomahawks, while others had spears, knives, bows and arrows.

The Medicine Man wore a hideous mask which represented some supernatural being he claimed he had seen in a dream.

The mask was painted black. It had enormous round red and white eyes ; a great gaping orange and green oblong mouth ; a huge square-shaped nose, bright blue in colour, and a pair of vivid yellow horns sticking out at the top. Across the forehead and cheeks, thick horizontal lines were painted in white.

To frighten the evil spirits away he carried a large rattle made of turtle shells, and a thick wooden club which had odd-shaped pieces of metal tied to it.

Red Feather and his sub-Chiefs sat on a raised dais to the right of his tepee. The rest of his warriors and braves sat in a circle round the dancers, while the squaws huddled together a few yards away from them.

A sudden movement near Red Feather's tepee caught Silver Claw's eye. He let out an excited gasp as he saw White Dove being led past the Chief. She was pulled along roughly by two braves who tied her to the totem pole, and left her.

White Dove gazed on the scene before her with apprehensive eyes. She was sure the Sioux intended to kill her. Her tense face was streaked with dirt. Her black hair fell in two matted plaits down her back. The single feather she wore in her headband—denoting she was a princess—had been broken off. She might have been terrified but she was far too proud to show it !

The little princess looked down at her beautiful white doeskin tunic. It was soiled and torn, with half its coloured beaded fringe

ripped off, and her exquisitely embroidered moccasins were filthy.

A plan unfolded itself in Silver Claw's mind as he kept his gaze focused on the forlorn little princess.

Suddenly the rhythm of the war drums changed. They began to beat faster, and the dancers started a weird high-pitched chant as they commenced to stamp round the fire with prancing steps, brandishing their weapons above their heads.

Abruptly they changed their tempo and started whirling madly about. They leaped excitedly in the air, flashing their weapons as they killed imaginary foe.

Their shrill chanting was alternated by piercing blood-curdling war-cries. In their frenzy several warriors grabbed sticks of blazing wood from the fire and waved them wildly about as they trotted crazily round the circle.

This was the moment for which Silver Claw had been waiting. He crept back to Magpie and led it down to the edge of the encampment. He tied it up behind the Chieftain's wigwam.

He advanced cautiously towards the circle of braves who were furiously beating the drums. Picking up a large stone, he crept up to the man nearest him who was sitting slightly back from the others, and cracked him over the head.

His low groan passed unnoticed amid all the noise. Silver Claw dragged him quickly away from the firelight's glow into the shadows.

He hastily searched round the back of the tepees for some rope, and found some lying on a soiled, torn piece of rag. Snatching up the rope and the rag he dashed back to the unconscious Indian and bound his hands and feet and gagged him.

He slipped on the brave's war bonnet and shirt. He wished he had some war paint to smear on his face, but there was not time to hunt round for any. He hoped he would not

There was the Sioux village, with the painted warriors dancing crazily around the totem pole.

The Medicine Man worked himself into a frenzy !

be recognised in the mass of whirling, leaping warriors.

Seeing a tomahawk lying on the ground, he picked it up and dashed into the circle of dancers, lurching and plunging about as madly as the rest. He hurriedly plucked a torch from out of the fire and frantically danced his way round the circle towards the totem pole.

White Dove's eyes widened with fear as the fierce dancer bounded up and down before her, and then circled round the pole. With the firelight behind him, she did not recognise Silver Claw. Several warriors followed him and joined in the furious procession round and round the terrified princess.

Silver Claw gave a mighty leap in the air and landed right in front of White Dove.

" White Dove " he hissed, " It is I, Silver Claw Magpie is waiting behind the tepee back of you. Run quickly when I release you. Climb into the next gully. I'll join you. Hurry ! "

Still leaping and shrieking he and the other Indians once more circled the totem pole. In a lightning flash Silver Claw's tomahawk slashed at the bonds which held White Dove.

She was freed !

The princess had disappeared behind the tepee and mounted Magpie before the Sioux had time to realize what had happened.

Silver Claw ran like the wind over to where the Sioux's ponies were corralled. He wrenched open the gate, and threw in his lighted torch.

Amidst the confusion of the squealing, stampeding mustangs and the frenzied cries of anger from the Sioux, Silver Claw streaked away into the darkness.

" See how you like trying to round-up your own ponies after they have been stampeded," he panted to himself. He chuckled to think how he had turned the tables on the Sioux.

He quickly found White Dove, and leaping on Magpie's back behind her, they galloped off into the night.

" Red Feather will soon be on our track, we must hurry, faster, faster, Magpie " the boy urged.

The Flight

BUT they were not to get away so easily. As Magpie pounded down the forest trail, the fugitives were sighted by a Sioux sub-Chief. He, more cunning than his tribesmen, had realised that the herd of mustangs must have been stampeded by an enemy and tomahawk in hand, had gone to look for the culprit.

His cruel eyes opened wide as he saw Silver Claw and White Dove riding the same pony.

Without a moment's hesitation he ran out into the trail just behind Magpie. Effortlessly, for the Plains Indians were magnificent runners, he overtook the pony and throwing his right arm round Silver Claw's waist, he plucked him bodily from the saddle.

As White Dove heard Silver Claw's cry of

(*Please turn to page* 122)

White Dove was pulled along roughly by two braves and tied to the totem pole.

Picking up a large stone, Silver Claw crept up behind the nearest Sioux warrior.

SILVER CLAW

(*Continued from page* 120)

alarm, her first instinct was to urge Magpie into an even faster gallop. But the next moment she felt Silver Claw torn from the horse and skilfully she hauled Magpie back almost on to its haunches.

She turned to look back. She uttered a low cry of horror as she saw the Sioux warrior rolling over and over, his tomahawk in his hand. Even in the dark she could see that Silver Claw was clinging to his antagonist with the tenacity of a mountain lion.

And Silver Claw was nearly as dangerous. His supple body wriggled in and out of the Sioux' grasp and although the brave aimed blow after blow at the boy, Silver Claw each time managed to evade the axe. True, one blow grazed his head open but the next moment Silver Claw caught hold of the man's wrist and bit it hard.

The Sioux uttered a yelp of agony and dropped the tomahawk. But Silver Claw was weakening. After all, he was only a boy and he was fighting a full-grown man learned in all the ways of Indian fighting.

Silver Claw felt a strong hand fasten round his throat. Tighter and tighter the Sioux brave squeezed and Silver Claw, his breath shut off, felt dizzier and dizzier.

Lights began to flash in front of his eyes. It seemed as though his brave rescue had come to naught.

Then suddenly he felt the grip relax and the brave fell across him, unconscious. Silver Claw slipped from beneath the senseless body. His head was aching and his throat felt as though it was wrapped in bands of steel.

Rubbing it ruefully, he looked up at White Dove. She stood over him, the warrior's tomahawk in her hand.

"Are you all right, Silver Claw?" she stammered and Silver Claw could see that she was very frightened. "I hit him with the flat of the blade."

"It was a good blow, White Dove," said Silver Claw, "And moreover, you saved my life."

"Silver Claw saved *my* life tonight," said White Dove simply. "I owed him a debt."

The Indian boy smiled and got to his feet.

"Then we are quits," he cried. "Now let us get away as quickly as possible. The Sioux snakes will be hot on our heels ere long."

He helped the Indian princess to remount Magpie and then again jumped up behind her. He kicked the pony's sides and they resumed their headlong gallop through the dark forest.

Far behind in the distance they could hear the screaming war-hoops of the Sioux and it

seemed as though already the pursuit had commenced.

Now it was that Magpie came into its own. It fairly flew over the ground, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake. It never seemed to notice the additional weight of White Dove on its back. It was as though it knew its beloved master's life was at stake.

On, on they raced and now their enemies' cries had dropped far behind. But Silver Claw knew they were far from safe. He knew the Sioux. They would never give up.

Silver Claw wanted to reach the river before dawn. Then they would be out in the open with no chance of hiding behind boulders or in clumps of trees. If the Sioux overtook them at the river in daylight, they would never live to cross it.

Keeping his bearings, Silver Claw guided Magpie off the beaten trail, into the forest. Thus he hoped to fool their pursuers for a while. The only result as far as he could see would be that he and White Dove would strike the river some miles below the ford. They would have to swim the river but Silver Claw did not anticipate much difficulty there.

It was as they sped beneath a huge tree that they heard the sudden roar of a mountain lion. Looking back, Silver Claw saw the beast leaping down on them from a large branch.

" On, Magpie—on ! " he shouted and the pony seemed to gather itself in mid-stride and then shoot off like an arrow. The lion missed Silver Claw's back by inches but his cruel talons raked Magpie's withers.

In a lightning flash, Silver Claw's tomahawk slashed at the bonds which held White Dove.

Silver Claw leapt on Magpie's back, behind White Dove, and they galloped off into the night.

The pony snorted and plunged wildly but Silver Claw dared not call a halt.

The mountain lion hit the ground heavily and was momentarily stunned. Seizing the advantage, Silver Claw urged Magpie faster through the dark forest. Soon they were out of sight of the lion and were safe at least from that peril.

They stopped at a rippling stream. White Dove dismounted and ripping a piece of buckskin from her tunic, she bathed Magpie's wounded haunches. Silver Claw helped her.

" Thanks, old fellow," he said. " That was a close call."

" Is it hurt badly ? " asked White Dove.

Silver Claw shook his head.

" The wounds will heal in a few days," he replied. " Now let us get on."

And so that dreadful night ride continued.

In the early light of dawn, they came at last to the river. They dismounted and the pony trotted off to drink the fresh cool water.

Silver Claw suddenly lay flat on his stomach on the dew-drenched earth and put his ear to the ground. He listened intently for a couple of minutes. Jumping up quickly he exclaimed, " White Dove, the Sioux dogs are not far off. They will catch us soon if we do not hurry."

Catching hold of her hand they raced down to the river bank. " We'll have to swim across, White Dove. It will be difficult because of the current. We don't want to be swept down-stream over the rapids. You catch hold of one side of Magpie's reins and I'll grab the other, then we won't get swept away, but mind you don't pull his head under water."

" Look over there, Silver Claw," exclaimed the princess pointing, " our little friends will help us."

The boy looked in the direction she was pointing. There on the river bank was a family of beavers. They were industriously building a dam. With their sharp teeth they had gnawed away several tree trunks which lay at the water's edge.

Silver Claw smiled and went over to the little animals.

" Sorry, Mr. Beaver," he said softly, " but we want two of your logs to help us across the river."

The beavers did not scuttle away for they were not afraid of the young Indian. Instead they watched inquisitively as the boy pushed two fair-sized logs away from the bank. Their bright eyes watched his every movement, and their tiny noses twitched excitedly.

Silver Claw pushed the logs towards White Dove who had entered the water. She grabbed one and clung on to it.

Hearing his master's whistle, Magpie plunged into the river beside them. They both slipped their arms through the sides of its reins and clinging on to the logs they waded waist deep in the cold stream.

A sudden drop in the river bed sent them floundering into the now swirling water.

Magpie struggled to keep its head above the water. The swift current was sweeping it down-stream, and dragging its master and White Dove with him.

" Pull on his reins, White Dove," Silver Claw panted, " we must try to steer him towards the bank."

" I can't " cried White Dove, " the reins have slipped off my arm and are twisted all round the log. Oh ! " she gasped as a sudden trick of the current whirled her log over and over.

The log slipped out of her grasp. She made a grab at the pony's tail and clung on.

Just at that moment her log crashed into a rock whose jagged point was sticking up out of the water. Magpie's reins caught round it and brought the pony up with such a jolt that Silver Claw, who was grimly holding on to the right-hand rein, was swung out of the water in a semi-circle and crashed into White Dove's log, while his own log went sailing down the river.

The sudden impact winded him. He felt dazed and for a moment scarcely knew what was happening.

With a frightened cry, White Dove made her way towards him by clinging on to the pony's back. She made a grab for the reins, and her sudden weight shot Magpie's head under water.

The pony's frantic struggles jerked the reins loose from the rock, and it was swept down-stream with the half dazed Silver Claw and the terrified princess clinging to the log and its reins.

" Silver Claw " gasped White Dove, " Look, the rapids ! "

" We must release Magpie's reins otherwise we'll get tangled up in them." And Silver Claw, with some difficulty, pulled out his knife and hacked them away from the log.

The rushing water knocked the knife out of his hand.

With nothing to hold it back, the pony was swept along at a terrific rate and disappeared over the rapids.

" Hang on tight, White Dove," shouted the boy. " Whatever you do, don't let go."

Together they clung desperately to the log as the rushing current forced them along. They closed their eyes as they shot the rapids.

Over and over they whirled in a tangled mass, but they clung on to the log, and each time they went under the swirling water, the log brought them to the surface again.

The mad fury of the current swept them on a few more yards down-stream, and then its frenzy subsided abruptly, and they found themselves bobbing about in a gentle mountain stream.

They swam over to the bank, climbed out, and utterly exhausted, bruised, and wet, they sank down on the cool mossy ground. They lay quite still for several moments. Then the boy sat up.

" Silver Claw offers thanks to Great Spirit for watching over him and White Dove."

White Dove solemnly nodded to show how much she agreed.

They had both come through many perils, and they were still in danger. They could not tell, even now, if they would ever reach the Cheyenne village in safety.

White Dove was far too proud to own up that she was near to exhaustion.

She looked at Silver Claw. His face and body were all cut and bruised from the rocks and the rapids. She looked down at her own hands and legs, cut and bruised.

Looking back, Silver Claw saw the mountain lion leaping down on them.

They were both in a bad way, weary and bedraggled. And they had lost their moccasins which was a serious matter for them.

" I've lost my knife, which is a bad thing," said Silver Claw.

They jumped nervously as a loud neighing rang in their ears.

Turning round they saw Magpie limping slowly towards them. One eye was cut and his legs were bleeding. They rushed up to him and greeted him thankfully.

" It is good to know Magpie is safe ! " cried White Dove, as she rubbed his velvety nose. " Now, we can —— "

But the words died on her lips, for, tearing along the opposite bank, were the Sioux, their feathered

Silver Claw and White Dove watched the Cheyenne warriors drive the treacherous Sioux braves across to the opposite bank.

headdresses flowing in the wind. On seeing Silver Claw and White Dove they let out a wild, ferocious cry and raced their ponies into the river.

Silver Claw's heart sank as he watched the enemy draw near. What could he do to save White Dove?

The Victory

A PIERCING war-cry of "Yo-ho-e-hee" and a shower of arrows whizzing over their heads made Silver Claw and White Dove whirl round sharply.

Streaking towards them was Dull Knife and his Cheyenne warriors. They were dressed for the grim business of battle. Unlike the Sioux, they were not bedecked with feathers and traditional finery, but wore only short breech-clouts and moccasins. Their bodies were smeared with hideous blue, yellow and red splashes of colour.

Silver Claw grabbed White Dove's hand and they sped over to some nearby bushes and trees which offered them cover. Throwing themselves flat on the ground they breathlessly watched the fierce battle which was being fought before their eyes.

The warriors of both tribes had met in mid-stream and were engaged in fierce, hand-to-hand fighting. Sioux and Cheyenne alike were felled by sweeping blows of hatches and knives. They clubbed each other wildly with their spiked war-clubs and tomahawks. They brought their spears and lances into play.

Some had been thrown from their ponies and were fighting waist deep in water, stalking each other like panthers.

All the time they uttered their tribal war-cries, and shouted threats and defiance at each other.

The Cheyenne's knives and axes rose and fell as they attacked their hated foe. They leaped and twisted and whirled in a mad frenzy.

With relentless fury they drove the Sioux

back, inch by inch, until they were on the river bank. By now the enemy had lost over half its force. Those still astride their ponies made a frantic attempt to escape but were instantly brought down by the Cheyenne's swift arrows.

The Sioux went down fighting. They fought to the bitter end, but Dull Knife's warriors were too strong for them. At last the remnants of the Sioux withdrew.

It had been no easy victory for the Cheyenne. They had suffered many losses but, in the end, their victory was complete.

While the warriors looked after their wounded, and cleaned their weapons, White Dove told her father of Silver Claw's bravery in rescuing her.

When she finished speaking the great Chief laid his hand on the young Indian's shoulder and said :

" Dull Knife is proud of Silver Claw's feat. His years are few but he shall be made a brave."

Silver Claw's eyes sparkled with pride and happiness as he heard his Chief's words.

" Chief Dull Knife, I thank you for bestowing so great an honour on one so young. At all times I shall try to be a good brave," he promised earnestly.

The Chief handed Silver Claw his knife.

" This knife has been used many times in battle. Many times it has saved Dull Knife's life. Sometime it will save the life of Silver Claw when he becomes a warrior and goes to battle. Take it, my son, and may the Great Spirit continue to watch over you."

The boy clasped the knife proudly as he thanked the Chief. Never had he been so happy. The feathered head-dress, proclaiming him a Chief was placed on his head. No other boy in the Cheyenne camp had been honoured in such a manner by Dull Knife. Silver Claw was almost bursting with pride and joy.

But his greatest moment came when White Dove took his hand and said :

" I am very proud of you, Silver Claw."

Her simple words filled his heart with a radiant happiness for he valued White Dove's friendship above all things.

In reply he could only stammer :

" Thank you, White Dove."

Thus Silver Claw, the young Indian boy, had turned what had seemed to be disgrace and failure into triumph and found himself a hero in the eyes of his people and his princess.

He was no longer a " young " Indian.

He was a Cheyenne warrior !

THE END

Dull Knife placed the feathered head-dress on Silver Claw's head !

BILLY BUNTER THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH

I'VE GOT A SHILLING TO SPEND AT THE TUCKSHOP!
DON'T PUSH-ER-WHY-IT'S MY DEAR BROTHER, WILLIAM!
YOU CLUMSY KID! WHERE'S MY SHILLING GONE-HAVE YOU TAKEN IT, BESSIE?
IT'S YOUR SILLY FAULT I'VE LOST IT! NOW HELP ME FIND IT!
YES-ER-DEAR WILLIAM!
HERE, I SAY-
HI! BESSIE! STOP THIEF!
OH! PARDON!
OOCH!

NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE! LET MY SISTER BESSIE GET AWAY-
OH, BUNTER- PLEASE BELIEVE ME- QUITE AN ACCIDENT-
NOW YOU CAN PUT ON SPEED AND CATCH BESSIE BEFORE SHE SPENDS MY SHILLING!
GO ON- FASTER! FULL SPEED AHEAD!
OW! YOU'VE LET ME DOWN, JONES MINOR!
OH! DISASTER! HELP!
PLEASE BUNTER- THIS BICYCLE IS DAMAGED-
GUR! NOW I'VE GOT TO RUN ALL THE WAY!
GASP! O CRUMBS! BESSIE WILL HAVE- GASP- SPENT MY CASH- GRUNT- GASP!

OW! TOO LATE! THERE'S BESSIE- AND SHE'S SPENT MY SHILLING!
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED! PINCHING YOUR BROTHER'S ONLY SHILLING-
YOU BAD BOY! I'LL TELL FATHER IF YOU SAY THAT-
I'LL NEVER SPEAK TO YOU AGAIN!
THAT WAS MY MONEY! IT ISN'T FAIR, BESSIE-
I DIDN'T FIND YOUR SILLY SHILLING! I'VE SPENT THE SHILLING UNCLE BOB SENT ME - SO THERE!
EH? O CRUMBS!
WHAT A SWIZZ! NOW I'VE GOT TO WALK MILES BACK AND LOOK FOR THAT SHILLING AGAIN!
IT WAS JUST ABOUT HERE - I'LL NOT GIVE UP TILL IT'S QUITE DARK! CRUMBS! THE TUCK SHOP WILL BE SHUT SOON!

I GIVE UP! I'VE LOST MY SHILLING - AND NOW MILES AND MILES TO WALK BACK TO SCHOOL!
I HAD BETTER WARN THAT PEDESTRIAN TO MOVE ASIDE FOR ME TO PASS!
DING-LING!
COO! JONES MINOR! GIVE ME A LIFT BACK TO SCHOOL, OLD CHAP!
CERTAINLY NOT! BY THE WAY - I FOUND A SHILLING -
OH! GOODY! HAND IT OVER, JONES MINOR!
AGAIN - CERTAINLY NOT! YOU DAMAGED MY MACHINE, AND YOUR MONEY HELPED TO PAY FOR THE REPAIR!
OW! YOU ROTTER! YOU LITTLE TWISTER! YAH! BOO! I'LL NEVER BE YOUR PAL AGAIN!

A pirate! The news swept through the ship like wildfire. "It's Avary's ship, all right," said Captain Brown, grimly.

THE PIRATE'S CABIN BOY

A Stirring Story of the Spanish Main

By A. THIRKELL

THE sturdy, three-masted sailing vessel *Flame* ploughed her way through the choppy waters of the Caribbean. On the after-deck, Captain Abel Brown, a short, thick-set man with grey bushy eyebrows, cast an anxious glance at the darkening west sky.

"This storm will be upon us before we get to Samana," he growled, to the young tousled-haired boy standing at his side. "And I shouldn't like to lose any of our precious cargo overboard."

The boy at his side was his youngest son, Dick, and Captain Brown had not wanted to bring him on such a dangerous voyage . . . for it was a very dangerous trip, indeed . . . into pirate infested waters. The year was 1725, the year when the dreaded Captain Avary ruled the waters of the West Indies.

Avary was a huge giant of a man, standing six-foot-six, with shoulders like an ox. Where his right hand had been, was now a hook, which he used just as well as any hand!

Avary's ship, the *Avenger* was like its master, big and powerful, and could out-run and out-gun anything afloat.

Captain Brown well knew the peril when he agreed to sail from Bristol to Samana with a cargo of stores for the island, and he had only undertaken the mission because the

Governor of the island, Sir Edmund Trevalyn, was an old friend of his.

" Yes, son, these stores are very important," said Captain Brown, as he stood talking to Dick. " No other ship has dared to call at Samana for months—they have been too scared of running into Avary and his pirate gang."

" We'll get through, dad," grinned Dick, " and if we do meet Avary, leave him to me ! I have been practising with my sword ! "

Captain Brown smiled as he gazed proudly at his son. Dick had not long recovered from a bad illness and the doctor had advised him to go on a long sea trip to regain his strength.

" How long before we get to Samana ? " asked Dick.

" About five hours," replied his father. " But if this storm hits us, maybe longer—— "

At that moment, a loud hail sounded from the look-out perched high up on the main mast.

" Sail ahoy ! Coming up fast Cap'n, on the starboard side ! "

Dick looked in the direction where the man was pointing. His keen eyes just made out the tops of the approaching vessel's sails. Twenty minutes later, he looked again, and he could see that she was fully rigged and overhauling them fast. She was much bigger and faster than the *Flame*.

" Can you make out her flag ? " shouted the Captain to the look-out.

" No—it is a strange sort of—My stars ! " The look-out's voice took on a note of amazement. " She's flying the Jolly Roger ! She's a pirate ! "

A pirate !

The news swept through the ship like wildfire !

" It's Avary's ship, all right," said Captain Brown, grimly. " We can't hope to out-run her, she's carrying too much sail for us. Nothing for it—we'll have to fight her off. We'll show Avary and his gang that we're no lame duck. If they want a fight, then they can have it ! "

Every minute brought the *Avenger* nearer. She was a great hulk of a ship, jet black—sinister—and bristling from stem to stern with cannons. On her quarter-deck, one man stood out from the rest. Even at this distance there was no mistaking Avary' wearing, as always, the red sash round the middle of his body.

Captain Brown well knew the terrible danger they were in, and, although he did not say it, he knew in his heart that the pirate was too powerful for them.

A faint puff of smoke arose from the *Avenger*. Her cannon had fired the first shot !

" Down ! " roared Captain Brown, at the same time giving Dick a violent shove that sent the boy sprawling to the deck. A few seconds later, the ball crashed over their heads and carried away part of the sail.

Captain Brown judged the distance between the two vessels and then roared to his gunners, " FIRE."

The *Flame's* guns exploded with a deafening crash. Dick gave a wild whoop of joy as he saw part of the *Avenger's* poop-deck carried away.

But Dick's joy was short-lived. As his father had rightly guessed, the *Avenger* was too powerful for them. A broadside from her guns carried away the *Flame's* main mast and brought the sails and rigging crashing down on the deck. A few minutes later, three cannon balls crashed into her hull just above the water line.

Captain Brown, his face grimed with smoke, and his clothes torn, crawled across to his son.

" We can't stand much more," he said. " We'll be blown out of the water." He dabbed a small cut on his chin. " There is only one thing to do. We'll try and ram the *Avenger* then board her and overpower the crew."

Dick picked up a sword from the deck. " Then I'm coming with you ! " he cried.

Captain Brown gently took the sword from his son. " Sorry, son," he said. " You're too young for that. You wait here till the fight's over."

Captain Brown sprang to the wheel and swung it hard over until the nose of the vessel was pointed straight at the *Avenger*.

On board the pirate ship, Avary's cruel eyes gleamed with amusement as he saw the *Flame* bearing down upon them.

" The impudent dogs ! " bellowed the pirate captain. " Methinks they'll try to

board us. Very well, me hearties, we'll give 'em a real welcome ! "

A few moments later, the *Flame* struck into the pirate. Then grappling irons were thrown across the *Avenger's* decks, thus locking the two ships together. As soon as this happened, the crew of the *Flame* leapt down from the rigging and landed on the decks of the pirate.

In a matter of seconds a fierce battle was raging. The men of the *Flame* fought bravely against terrific odds, but it was only a matter of time before they were beaten back. After twenty minutes, only Captain Brown and his Second Mate remained on their feet against the pirates.

Watching from the *Flame*, Dick saw what was happening. He made up his mind in a flash. A long length of rope hung down at his side from a broken mast. Grabbing the rope in both hands, Dick swung himself forward and landed on the *Avenger* close to where his father and the Mate were fighting back to back.

The sudden appearance of Dick startled the pirates and the boy was able to pick up a sword from the deck. Avary and his men soon recovered from their shock and returned to the attack.

Dick soon made it evident, that young though he was, he certainly knew how to handle a sword. Standing shoulder to shoulder, Captain Brown, Dick and the Mate beat off attack after attack—until in parrying a thrust by Avary, Captain Brown slipped and fell to the deck. In an instant, Avary sprang forward and levelled his sword at the Captain's throat.

" Drop your sword, me young cockerel," he shouted to Dick. " Or your captain is a dead man ! "

Dick had to obey, as did the Mate. Their weapons clattered to the deck, and half-a-dozen pirates sprang forward and pinioned their arms.

" What shall we do with them ? " asked one cut-throat. " Throw 'em to the sharks ? "

Avary eyed Dick from head to foot. " No," he growled, rasping his chin. " Methinks the kid is handy with the sword. He'll make a fine buccaneer—with a little coaxing ! "

Grabbing the rope in both hands, Dick swung himself aboard the *Avenger*.

Dick's eyes blazed. " I'll never join your thieving crew ! "

" Ho, ho, ho ! " Avary's huge body shook with uncontrollable laughter. " Fine words, me young hearty. But I'll warrant you'll change your mind, unless—— " and he thrust his hairy face into Dick's, " unless you want something to happen to your captain ! "

Dick clenched his fists. " If you touch my father——"

" Your father, eh ? " cried Avary. " Better still ! Now listen to me, boy," he added, grabbing Dick by the front of his shirt. " For the rest of the trip you'll act as me cabin boy. And if you try any tricks—remember what could happen to your father ! "

Avary then gave orders for Captain Brown and his mate to be taken below and chained up. Dick watched them go, and vowed that somehow he would release them.

Meanwhile, since the end of the fighting, most of the pirates had swarmed aboard the *Flame* and commenced to unload her cargo on to their own ship. When they had finished, the grappling irons were thrown off and the two ships drifted apart.

By now, the storm which had been blowing up from the West, was nearly upon them. Great black clouds scudded overhead and the sharp gusts of wind were becoming more frequent.

The battered *Flame* gradually began to sink deeper in the water, and Dick watched with misty eyes as the ship which had been his home for many weeks, finally slithered beneath the waves.

Then the storm broke. A jagged fork of lightning tore across the sky and was soon followed by a gigantic thunderclap. The wind which had been rapidly freshening was now a howling gale, tearing and screaming through the rigging.

Avary's voice rose above the storm, yelling to his men to furl the sails. Her nose dipping and rising, the *Avenger* battled her way forward, timbers creaking and groaning under the strain.

On the slippery moving deck, Dick had to hold on to a rope to prevent himself pitching over the side.

Avary spotted him and roared. " Get below to the galley and bring some food to my cabin. Hurry."

Dick found the galley and then made his way back to Avary's cabin. He entered—it was deserted. Dick looked round and decided to leave the food on a table. He was about to go out when a piece of parchment lying on the floor, caught his eye. Dick bent down and picked up the paper. He opened it out and his eyes glistened as he saw what it was. It was a map showing Avary's secret hide-out.

Dick studied it intently, memorising every detail. The island, in the Tristan group, was almost encircled by sharp submerged rocks. These prevented ships from going too near. But at the Northern tip of the island there was a clear channel. This led into a fairly large bay which was screened from the outside by some smaller islands.

It was a magnificient hide-out—little wonder Avary had been able to carry out his piracy with such success.

So engrossed was Dick that he did not hear a slight footstep behind him——Avary had returned !

The first that Dick knew of his presence was a wicked-looking curved hook flashing past his nose and tearing the chart from his hands !

" Spying eh ! " There was a sinister note in the pirate's voice and his ugly face was contorted in rage. In spite of himself, Dick trembled. Slowly he backed towards the open door, the pirate following, his eyes never leaving the boy's.

" You can't escape me. You know too much ! "

Dick turned and ran, out on to the slippery deck. At that moment, the ship was hit by a huge wave. Dick saw it coming, tried to grab a rope, missed his footing and was swept over the side, to disappear in the broiling waters.

On Samana Island

THE warm sun beat down from a cloudless sky. The storm of the previous night had died away and now the sea was calm. The small waves surged gently on to the beach, ran among the rocks, then gurgling and hissing, flowed back into the sea. And on one of those waves that swept on to the beach, there was a large square piece of wood.

It was a ship's broken-off hatch-cover. And lying on it, face down, was Dick.

By a miracle he was still alive. All through the wild and terrible night he had hung on to the hatch-cover, even though his body became numb with cold. Many times he had nearly lost consciousness and slipped into the sea, but each time he had managed to cling on. Now, as the hatch-cover dug into the sand, Dick rolled off.

He remained lying quite still, hardly realising he was on dry land. Then, he seemed to hear a voice in his ear . . . to feel something touching his face. Slowly his eyes flickered open and he had a hazy glimpse of someone bending over him. Gradually his senses returned and he saw that a pretty young girl was at his side.

" Oh, I am so glad that you are alive," she was saying. " I was walking along the beach and saw you drifting in on that piece of wood. Do you come from a ship ? Was it wrecked in last night's storm ? "

Dick nodded his head weakly, and he tried to struggle to a sitting position. " Where am I ? " he whispered. " And who are you ? "

" This is the island of Samana," came the girl's reply. " My name is Mary Trevalyn. My father is the Governor of the island."

" Samana ! " The word seared through Dick's brain, bringing the memory flooding back. " I must talk with your father," he gasped. " Can . . . can you help me to walk ? My father's ship was sunk by the pirate Avary. I—I know the way to Avary's secret bay. Please take me to the Governor."

Helped by Mary, the boy struggled to his feet. His head throbbed with every step he took and once or twice he nearly fell.

" Not much farther," urged Mary. " Look ! Only another hundred yards along this path."

Dimly, as through a mist, Dick saw a large house. Mary was shouting to some men working nearby. " Sebastian ! Mathew ! Come quickly ! Help me with this young man." Then Dick felt sturdy arms on either side and he was carried into the house and into a small bedroom.

Meanwhile, Mary's father, Sir Edmund Trevalyn, was pacing the floor of his study. His brow creased in an angry frown, and the

Dick was swept over the side into the raging sea.

three ships' officers sitting at a table were also looking distinctly worried.

" We must drive Avary off the sea," Sir Edmund was saying. " We have a fine sturdy ship, good stout-hearted men, muskets and cannon. But we still have not the faintest idea where Avary is to be found. Twice his ship has been seen near the Tristan group of islands, and each time he just seemed to disappear. We have tried to get near those islands, only to find that they are encircled by sharp submerged rocks. So we can assume that Avary cannot hide-out in the islands."

" Aye, Sir Edmund," agreed one of the officers. " The rocks around the Tristan islands will rip the bottom out of the stoutest ship."

" We nearly lost a good ship there a year ago," added another officer.

A knock sounded on the door, and Sir Edmund frowned. He had given orders that he was not to be disturbed. The door opened, and Mary entered, looking flushed and excited.

" What is it dear ? " asked her father. " We are very busy and—— "

" I know, daddy, I am sorry, but the need is urgent. A young man has just been washed up on the beach. I have had him put in the small room. And father," added Mary, " he knows the way to Captain Avary's hide-out."

" WHAT ! " Sir Edmund's eyebrows shot up in absolute astonishment, while the news had an equally startling effect on the other three men.

" Take me to him at once ! " gasped Sir Edmund. " Come gentlemen," he motioned to the officers, " we must question this young man."

When they entered the room, Dick was propped up in bed sipping a hot drink.

" Now my boy," said the Governor. " Do you feel like answering some questions ? " Dick nodded his head in assent, and Sir Edmund continued. " This is amazing news you have of Avary. What is your name ? "

" Dick Brown, sir," answered the boy.

" Brown ? " echoed Sir Edmund. " Not the son of Captain Brown ? "

" Yes sir. Our ship the *Flame* was sunk by Avary yesterday, just before the storm broke."

" And what of Avary's hide-out ? " queried the Governor. " You know how to get there ? "

" I saw a map in Avary's cabin," responded Dick. " It was a chart showing the Tristan islands. As you may know, submerged rocks prevent any vessel going too near. But at the Northern end of the islands there is a clear channel. Two queerly shaped rocks jutting out of the water indicate the entrance to the channel. You sail along until you come to some small islands. Once behind those islands you enter a small sheltered bay. It is hidden from the outside by the smaller islands."

" Amazing ! " uttered Sir Edmund, when Dick had finished speaking. " So that is where Avary hides out. Will you lead us there, my boy ? When you are stronger, of course."

" I'm strong enough, now, sir," said Dick. " My father is a prisoner and I will do anything to help rescue him from Avary."

" That's the spirit," boomed Sir Edmund. " Now if you can—— "

" Please father," interrupted Mary, gently. " No more questions to-day. He has been through a terrible ordeal. He must get some sleep."

" You are right, my dear," smiled Sir Edmund. He turned to Dick. " Get some sleep. We will talk later. But we sail in search of Avary in two days."

The Pirate Stronghold

THANKS to Mary's help and care Dick was well enough in two days to sail with Sir Edmund and his gallant crew of one hundred picked men.

And so, with Sir Edmund in command of the fast, handsome-looking *Sprite*, they left Samana Bay and headed towards the open sea. And among the enthusiastic crowd waving from the harbour, was Mary, her golden hair streaming in the breeze. Dick waved until the harbour was just a grey smudge in the distance.

The journey to the Tristan islands would take seven days and during that time Sir Edmund kept the men in training, and talked over his plans with Dick and the officers. On the evening of the seventh day, the high hills of the Tristan islands showed up on the horizon, and, when the sun sank out of sight, the *Sprite* lay ten miles off the northern-most tip, the side where the clear channel lay. Sir Edmund stood talking to Dick.

" We'll anchor here tonight and go in at the first streaks of dawn," he said. " And now you had better try and get some sleep. Tomorrow we have a very busy day ! "

But try as he could, Dick could not sleep that night. He lay in his bunk, his mind alive and active, wondering what would happen on the morrow. Would he be able to rescue his father ? Would they be able to capture Avary ?

Eventually he did drop off into a doze and the next thing he remembered was a hand softly shaking his shoulder. Sir Edmund was

at his side and saying, " It will be dawn in a few minutes time."

Dick scrambled out of his bed, he had not undressed, so he was ready to go up on deck immediately. The morning air was sharp, and taking a deep breath he soon felt wide awake. Gradually, fingers of light stole across the sky, and then the first tip of the sun appeared and steadily started to climb higher in the sky, looking like a huge orange.

The island showed up stark clear and Dick easily recognised the two queer shaped rocks which he had seen on Avary's map. It was between these rocks that the ship had to steer Dick's eyes glistened with excitement. Another twenty minutes would see them through the gap.

The men tightened their sword belts, the gun crews stood by their guns. Everything was ready—and now they were in the bay. As it opened out before them, the look-out's shout told them of a big black ship anchored over quite close to the shore.

" It *is* the *Avenger* ! " cried Dick.

" Aye, and not many men aboard," put in one of the ship's officers. " Most of them will be ashore, leaving only a skeleton crew aboard."

" Where am I ? " asked Dick, " who are you ? "

until they were within a quarter of a mile of the shore. Then between two smaller islands —and behind them lay the secret bay. Would they find Avary's ship inside or had she gone on another raiding expedition ?

Slowly, feeling her way, the *Sprite* moved towards the islands. On either side of them they could see the half-hidden rocks just beneath the clear waters. Rocks waiting to tear the bottom out of the ship. Everyone was tense and expectant. Would they get through ?

As they approached the two small islands, they saw the narrow gap between them. " So far so good ! " exclaimed Sir Edmund.

It was true enough. Only a few men were on the *Avenger* and they goggled in open-mouthed amazement when they saw the *Sprite* bearing down on them. One or two of the braver pirates tried to bring guns to bear on the *Sprite* but quickly changed their minds when a broadside swept into their ship, bringing down most of the spars and starting a fire. They panicked and flung themselves over-board and swam as fast as they could for the nearby shore.

On board the *Sprite* Sir Edmund chuckled and clapped Dick on the back. " Now for Avary and the rest of his crew ! " he said.

They sailed past the burning *Avenger* and

Dick dodged, and Avary's sword buried itself in the wall—and snapped off short.

soon entered a small harbour. A fair number of buildings were clustered on shore and about a mile away from the township, they saw a large imposing castle, at the top of a rise, grim and foreboding.

"That will be Avary's place no doubt," said Sir Edmund. "He must have heard our cannon and will be preparing a welcome."

"Not a sign of anybody on shore," said one of the officers. "It looks deserted, every building is shuttered."

"The calm before the storm," muttered Sir Edmund.

The *Sprite* tied up alongside the harbour wall and Sir Edmund and Dick jumped ashore. The rest of the crew followed them and were soon formed up in a column. Before them was the main square of the small town, deserted.

Then it came! A terrific bull-like shout echoed from a far corner of the square. It was Avary's voice giving the signal to attack. The echo had hardly died away, when, from three sides of the square the pirates appeared and converged on the men of the *Sprite*. Next moment a fierce battle was raging.

Dick caught sight of Avary and battled his way towards the pirate chief. When their eyes met, the buccaneer stared at him incredulously, as if seeing a ghost.

"You!" exclaimed Avary. "You led them here—only you knew the secret channel." Spluttering with fury, he lunged his sword at Dick.

The boy easily evaded the rush and then said quietly, "What have you done with my father?"

In answer, Avary again swung viciously at him, and again missed, for Dick, light as a panther on his feet, stepped aside and allowed the pirate to go careering past.

"The fight is going against you, mister pirate," said Dick. "Look! Your men are falling back on every side. Better surrender!"

"WHAT!" exploded Avary, "surrender to a mere boy!"

His sword flailing, the pirate rushed at Dick. The boy retreated until he felt a wall up against his back. He could go no farther.

"Now I have you," leered Avary. His sword swept through the air straight at Dick's head. Just in time the boy ducked, the sword went over his head and buried itself in the wall—and snapped off short.

Dick straightened up and pointed his own sword at the pirate.

"Now, tell me where I can find my father," he said, grimly, his sword flashing out and cutting through the red sash around Avary's waist.

The pirate was beaten, and he knew it.

"You will find him locked up in the castle," he foamed. "In the dungeons with the other prisoners."

As Avary finished speaking, Sir Edmund ran up with some of his men. The pirate chief was secured and marched away under armed guard.

When Dick and Sir Edmund reached Avary's castle, they found it stored with treasure of all kinds—the result of three years' piracy. Captain Brown and fifty-three other seamen found locked in the deep dungeons, were soon released, and there followed a happy reunion between Dick and his father.

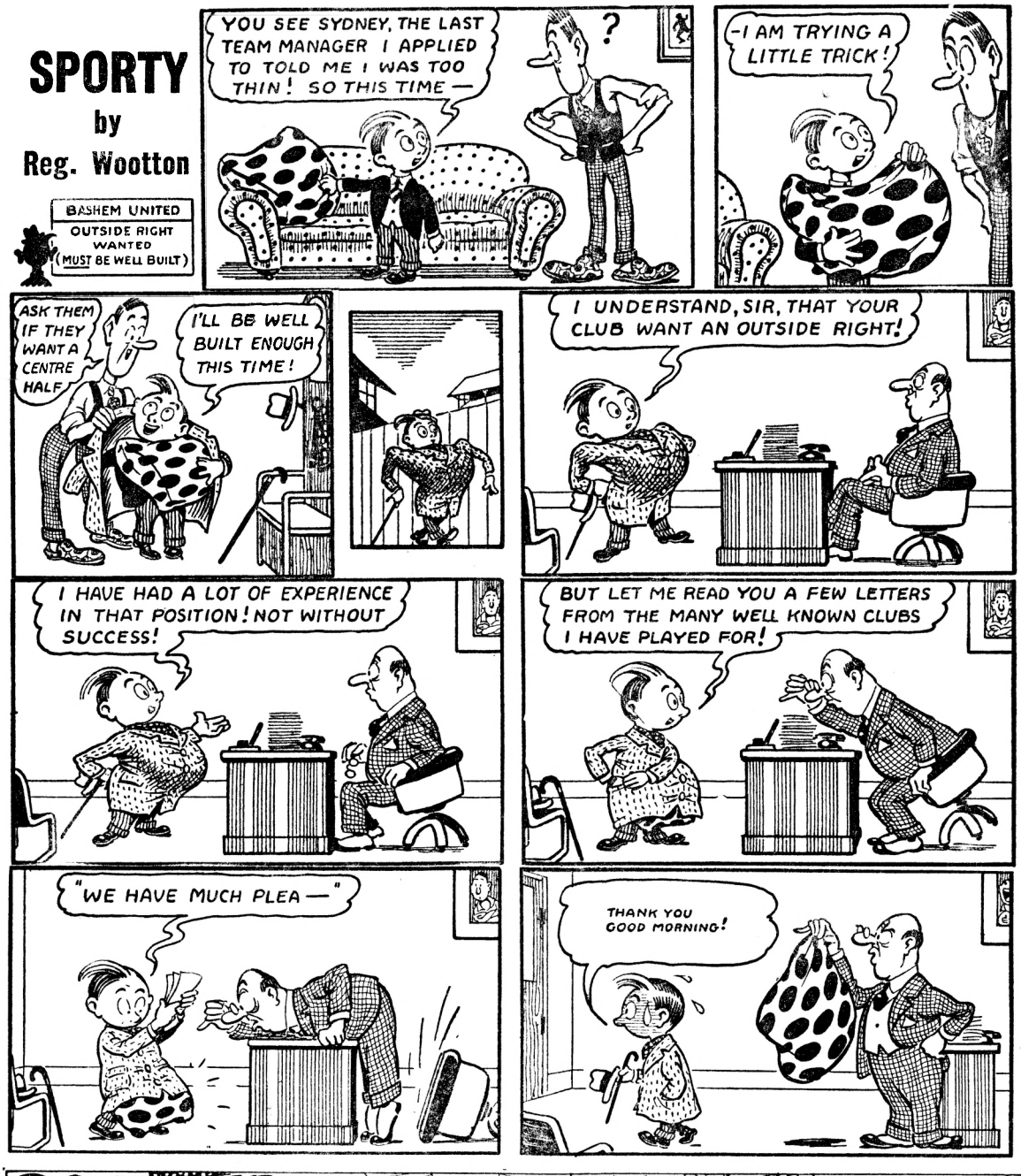
And so, Avary's reign of terror was over, largely because of the pluck of Dick Brown.

THE END.

SPORTY

by

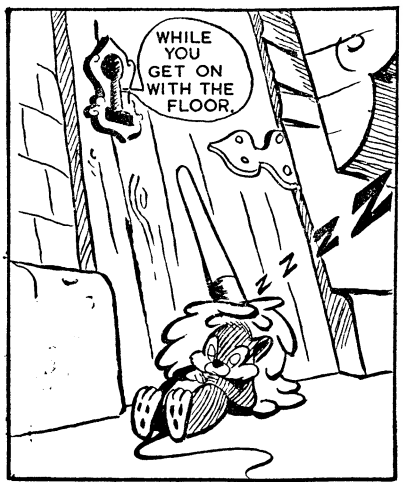
Reg. Wootton

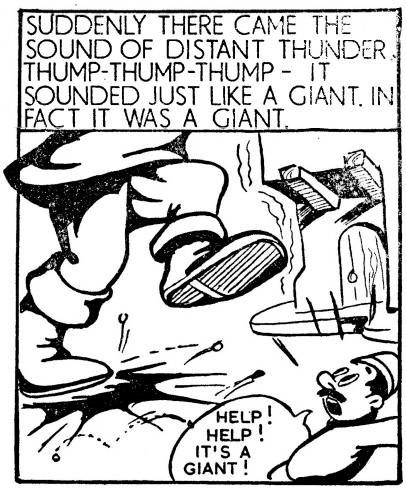

BASHEM UNITED
OUTSIDE RIGHT WANTED
(MUST BE WELL BUILT)
YOU SEE SYDNEY, THE LAST TEAM MANAGER I APPLIED TO TOLD ME I WAS TOO THIN! SO THIS TIME —
?
-I AM TRYING A LITTLE TRICK!
ASK THEM IF THEY WANT A CENTRE HALF
I'LL BE WELL BUILT ENOUGH THIS TIME!
I UNDERSTAND, SIR, THAT YOUR CLUB WANT AN OUTSIDE RIGHT!
I HAVE HAD A LOT OF EXPERIENCE IN THAT POSITION! NOT WITHOUT SUCCESS!
BUT LET ME READ YOU A FEW LETTERS FROM THE MANY WELL KNOWN CLUBS I HAVE PLAYED FOR!
"WE HAVE MUCH PLEA —"
THANK YOU GOOD MORNING!

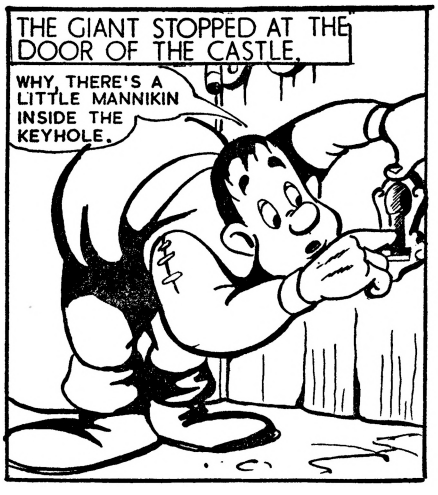
DO YOU KNOW?
THE MOON IS WITHOUT LIFE, AIR, OR WATER. SOME OF ITS MOUNTAINS ARE 20,000 FEET HIGH, AND SOME OF ITS CRATERS 100 MILES ACROSS.
The CROWN
CAN YOU SAY THIS 3 TIMES QUICKLY? "SUN, SHINE UPON THE SIGN — SHINE, SUN SHINE!"
THIS PRETTY RED TUFT, WHICH YOU MAY FIND ON THE WILD ROSE, IS A GALL CAUSED BY AN INSECT.
CAN YOU BLOW THROUGH A BOTTLE?
PUT A LIGHTED CANDLE — BEHIND A BOTTLE, AND BLOW. THE CANDLE WILL GO OUT!

The ADVENTURES of TOM THUMB
I'M TOM THUMB, I AM.
ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A LITTLE BOY CALLED TOM THUMB. HE WAS SO SMALL THAT HE LIVED WITH HIS FRIEND FURRY, A WATER VOLE, IN AN OLD STOVE.
THESE TWO SHARED A BED.
AND WHEN MORNING CAME.
THEY GOT UP AND WENT TO WORK AT THE CASTLE.
COME ON. WE'RE LATE FOR WORK.
O.K. TOM, I'LL RACE YOU TO THE CASTLE.
BEAT YOU TO IT AGAIN, TOM.
I KNOW, BUT YOU TIRE YOURSELF. THEN I END UP BY DOING ALL THE WORK.

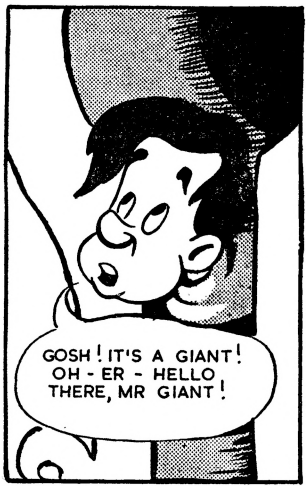
THEN TOM GOT TO WORK
I'LL CLEAN OUT THIS OLD KEYHOLE.


WHILE YOU GET ON WITH THE FLOOR.

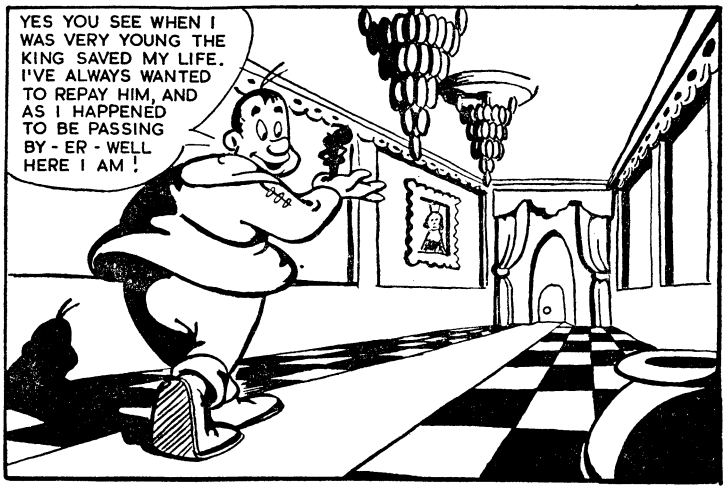

SUDDENLY THERE CAME THE SOUND OF DISTANT THUNDER. THUMP-THUMP-THUMP - IT SOUNDED JUST LIKE A GIANT. IN FACT IT WAS A GIANT.
HELP! HELP! IT'S A GIANT!


THE GIANT STOPPED AT THE DOOR OF THE CASTLE.
WHY, THERE'S A LITTLE MANNIKIN INSIDE THE KEYHOLE.

INSIDE THE KEYHOLE.
OOH! WHAT A BIG FINGER.


GOSH! IT'S A GIANT! OH - ER - HELLO THERE, MR GIANT!

I SUPPOSE YOU'VE COME TO SEE THE KING! COME ON IN!

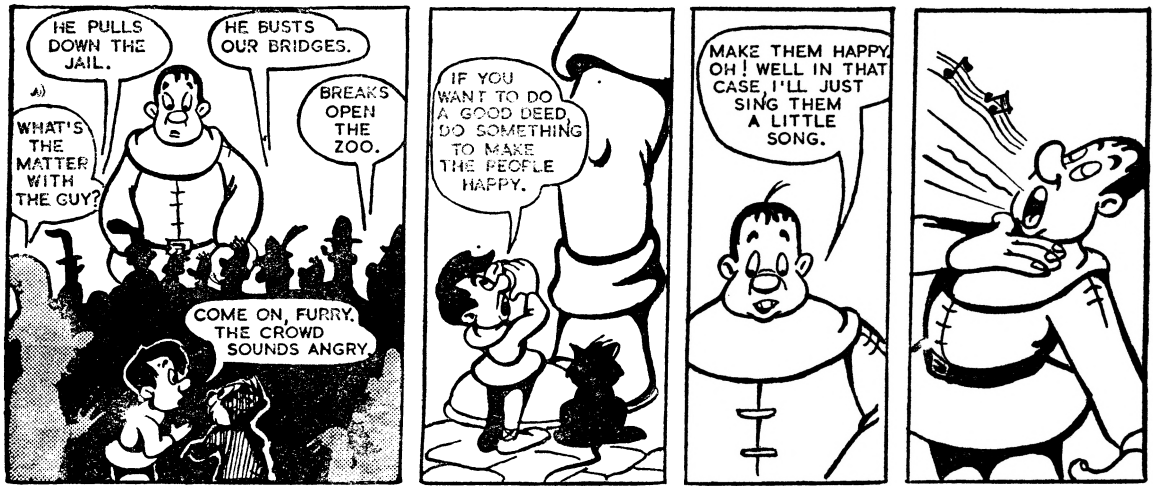

YES YOU SEE WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG THE KING SAVED MY LIFE. I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO REPAY HIM, AND AS I HAPPENED TO BE PASSING BY - ER - WELL HERE I AM!

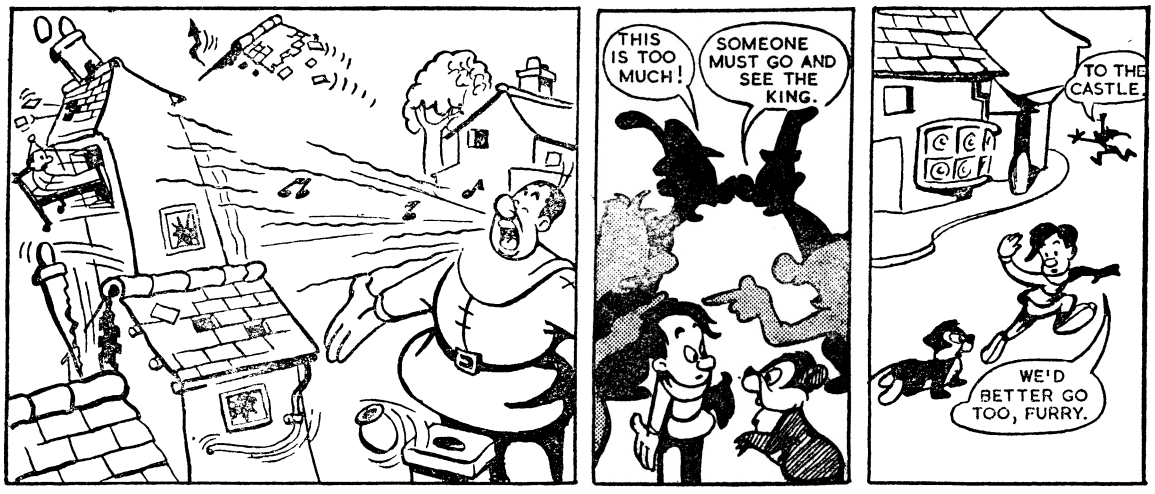
ER - EXCUSE US. MAY WE COME IN?
BY ALL MEANS.
THAT'S THE KING, OVER THERE.
IN THE KING'S LIBRARY.
NOW WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU - OH DEAR!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, HE'S ONLY COME TO DO YOU A GOOD TURN BECAUSE YOU SAVED HIS LIFE ONCE.
I SAVED HIS LIFE?
THAT'S RIGHT, BUT I WAS VERY YOUNG AT THE TIME, SO PERHAPS YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME.
HERE'S A PICTURE OF ME TAKEN AT THE TIME.
HM-M. I OUGHT NOT TO BE ABLE TO FORGET A FACE LIKE THAT. SEEMS TO ME A LONG TIME AGO - NO, I CAN'T BE SURE.
MOST INTERESTING. WELL, IT'S BEEN NICE SEEING YOU AGAIN. I MUST BE OFF NOW.
OOPS-A-DAISY! BUT LISTEN - YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
WHEN I THINK OF ALL I OWE YOU, I LIE AWAKE AT NIGHT TRYING TO THINK OF A WAY TO PAY YOU BACK!
SOMETHING FIT FOR A GIANT-LIKE KILLING A DRAGON, OR DESTROYING AN ARMY, OR SITTING ON A WITCH, OR -
OH!

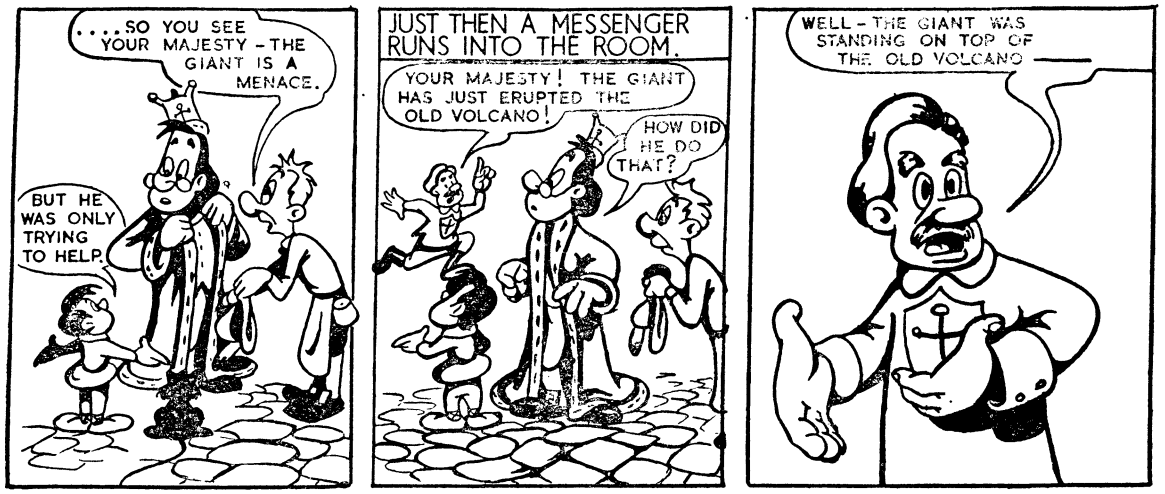
LET ME SEE. NO, WE JUST DON'T HAVE ANYTHING LIKE THAT THESE DAYS.
WELL-ER-(GIGGLE) I BET THERE'S A PRETTY LITTLE DAMSEL I COULD RESCUE FROM DISTRESS.
SORRY MY BOY! BUT FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN — ER, I MEAN FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, THE DAMSELS IN THIS TOWN CAN TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.
HOW ABOUT A WICKED OGRE? I COULD WRESTLE WITH HIM!
AND JUMP ON HIM!
ER-N-N-N-N-NO.
NO NO NO!!! AND IF WE HAD, I KNOW ONE THING. YOU CERTAINLY WOULDN'T JUMP ON HIM IN HERE!
HUH?
CHEER UP, OLD GIANT. WE'LL FIND SOMETHING YOU CAN DO.

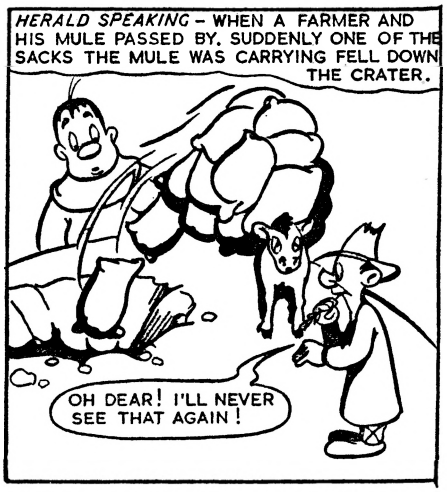
AND THROUGH ALL THIS COMMOTION...
TALKS IN SLEEP.
HOW CAN A FELLOW HOPE TO SLEEP THROUGH THESE EARTHQUAKES?
WHICH JUST GOES TO SHOW WHAT YOU CAN MISS BY GOING TO SLEEP IN THE DAY-TIME.
EARLY NEXT MORNING THE GIANT SETS OUT ALONE TO DO HIS GOOD DEED.
GROCER
NO BILLS
A LITTLE FURTHER ON.
SOB (GULP)
WHAT'S THE MATTER, LITTLE FELLOW?
HUH? OH (SOB) YOU SEE I'M THE LOCAL CARTER. BUT MY PONY HAS JUST DIED.
AND NOW I HAVEN'T ANY ANIMAL TO PULL MY CART!
OH BOY, A GOOD DEED. NOW IS MY CHANCE.
HELLO, WHAT'S THIS?
ZOO
WHY, THEY'VE GOT LOTS OF ANIMALS IN HERE DOING NOTHING.
LIONS
I'LL PUT THEM TO WORK AND HELP THE TOWNFOLK.
WELL, MR CARTER, I GOT YOUR CART FIXED UP.

HELP! YARUGH!
ODD. THAT FELLOW GOT QUITE ANGRY. HELLO, HERE'S SOMETHING!
OH, THIS IS EASY. ALL I NEED IS A LITTLE WOOD.
DANGER TO BOATS LOW BRIDGE
A COUPLE MORE STICKS LIKE THIS SHOULD FIX IT.
HELP.
WOA, BOY, WOA.
NOW WHAT?
OH DEAR I GUESS IN FUTURE I'D BETTER ASK FOLK WHAT THEY WANT FIRST. AH, THERE'S A MAN IN TROUBLE
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
HUH? OH-ER GET ME OUT OF HERE.
TOWN JAIL
THANKS PAL.
HEY, YOU BIG CHUMP, YOU'VE JUST HELPED PUBLIC ENEMY NO.1 TO ESCAPE.
WORD REACHES TOM THUMB OF THE GIANT'S DOINGS AND HE SETS OUT WITH FURRY TO HELP HIM.
HURRY, FURRY, OR WE'LL BE TOO LATE.
I SURE HOPE HE KEEPS OUT OF TROUBLE

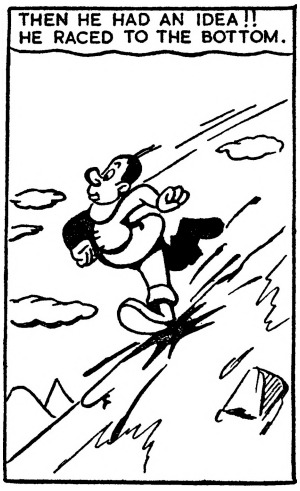

HE PULLS DOWN THE JAIL.
HE BUSTS OUR BRIDGES.
BREAKS OPEN THE ZOO.
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE GUY?
COME ON, FURRY. THE CROWD SOUNDS ANGRY.
IF YOU WANT TO DO A GOOD DEED, DO SOMETHING TO MAKE THE PEOPLE HAPPY.
MAKE THEM HAPPY. OH! WELL IN THAT CASE, I'LL JUST SING THEM A LITTLE SONG.


THIS IS TOO MUCH!
SOMEONE MUST GO AND SEE THE KING.
TO THE CASTLE.
WE'D BETTER GO TOO, FURRY.

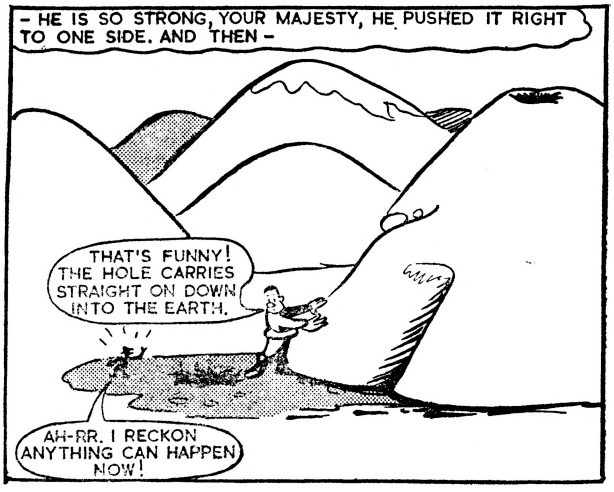

....SO YOU SEE YOUR MAJESTY - THE GIANT IS A MENACE.
BUT HE WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP.
JUST THEN A MESSENGER RUNS INTO THE ROOM.
YOUR MAJESTY! THE GIANT HAS JUST ERUPTED THE OLD VOLCANO!
HOW DID HE DO THAT?
WELL - THE GIANT WAS STANDING ON TOP OF THE OLD VOLCANO


HERALD SPEAKING – WHEN A FARMER AND HIS MULE PASSED BY. SUDDENLY ONE OF THE SACKS THE MULE WAS CARRYING FELL DOWN THE CRATER.
OH DEAR! I'LL NEVER SEE THAT AGAIN!

THE GIANT AT ONCE REACHED DOWN THE HOLE TO TRY AND GET IT BACK, BUT HE COULDN'T FIND IT.

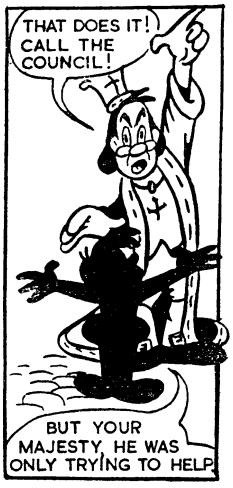

THEN HE HAD AN IDEA!! HE RACED TO THE BOTTOM.

AND STARTED TO PUSH AGAINST THE OLD VOLCANO WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH. AND DO YOU KNOW –
YOU BE A CHUMP YOU BE! FANCY PUSHING THE OLD VOLCANO! IT HASN'T ERUPTED FOR A HUNDRED YEARS.


– HE IS SO STRONG, YOUR MAJESTY, HE PUSHED IT RIGHT TO ONE SIDE. AND THEN –
THAT'S FUNNY! THE HOLE CARRIES STRAIGHT ON DOWN INTO THE EARTH.
AH-RR. I RECKON ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN NOW!

HELLO, WHAT'S THAT FUNNY RUMBLING SOUND? IT SEEMS TO BE GETTING NEARER. NOW I WONDER –
RUMBLE

YEEOW!
BA DOOM

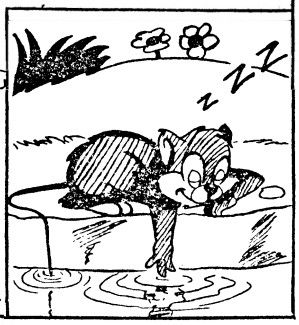

THAT DOES IT! CALL THE COUNCIL!
BUT YOUR MAJESTY, HE WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP.

THAT'S ENOUGH OUT OF YOU! THE GIANT MUST GO! YOU GET TO WORK.
YES, SIR.

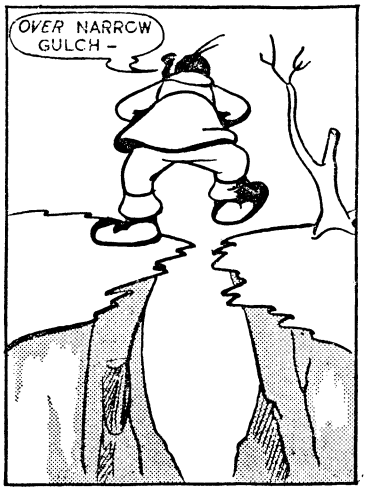
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.
WELL, GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE DECIDED THE GIANT MUST GO. BUT HOW?
WHAT ABOUT SENDING HIM SOMEWHERE TO DO THAT GOOD DEED HE'S ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT?
THAT'S IT. LET'S SAY THAT WE'RE SHORT OF MONEY. THEN ASK HIM TO GO AND FIND SOME BURIED TREASURE OR SOMETHING.
YES! LET'S SAY THERE'S A POT OF GOLD BURIED IN A PLACE THAT DOESN'T EXIST. HE'LL NEVER FIND IT - AND NEVER COME BACK. SAY SOME PLACE THAT'S BACK TO FRONT, OR UPSIDE-DOWN, OR -
I'VE GOT IT!! AN UPSIDE-DOWN TOWN -
THERE'S NO SUCH PLACE.
BUT I SAY - SUPPOSING THE OLD BOY GETS LONELY - OR FORGETS WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR. HE MIGHT TURN BACK. DON'T YOU THINK WE OUGHT TO SEND SOMEONE ALONG WITH HIM?
YES
THAT'S RIGHT.
NOW WHO WOULD
WE
MISS
LEAST
OF
ALL?
HUH? SAY, WHY ARE YOU ALL LOOKING AT ME?
HMM, TOM THUMB! THE COUNCIL HAS DECIDED THAT YOU SHALL GO WITH THE GIANT ON HIS QUEST FOR THE UPSIDE-DOWN TOWN AND THE GOLD THAT IS BURIED THERE.
SADLY TOM THUMB TURNED AWAY. HE KNEW THE GIANT WASN'T SUCH A BAD FELLOW AND WAS ONLY TRYING TO BE HELPFUL. TOGETHER THE TWO ADVENTURERS SET OUT.

ALL THE FOLK WERE GLAD TO BE RID OF THE GIANT AT LAST. KNOWING THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER TROUBLE THEY WENT HAPPILY TO WORK

ALL, THAT IS, EXCEPT FURRY, WHO SHOULD HAVE GONE ON THE TRIP, TOO, BUT WENT BACK TO SLEEP AND GOT LEFT BEHIND.



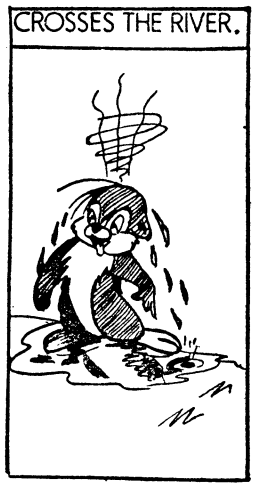
MEANWHILE ON THE EDGE OF THE TOWN, TOM AND THE GIANT EXAMINED THEIR MAP.



AND THEN WE - OH DEAR, THE MAP DOESN'T SEEM TO GO ANY FARTHER.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN FROM HERE signed The King (HA! HA!)
RIVER
MIND THE LOOSE STONE
I'LL TEAR UP THIS OLD MAP.
1 MILE
FROM NOW ON WE'LL JUST HAVE TO ASK THE WAY - AH, THERE'S AN OLD MAN WE CAN ASK.
MY, IT'S STARTED TO SNOW. IN THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER, TOO!
ER - EXCUSE ME. COULD YOU TELL ME HOW WE CAN GET TO THE UPSIDE DOWN TOWN?
UPSIDE DOWN TOWN? THERE'S NO SUCH PLACE. THE BOY MUST BE CRAZY.
SORRY, MY YOUNG FELLOW! I'VE HEARD OF IT OF COURSE, BUT I CAN'T SAY WHERE IT IS OFF-HAND!
?
MY! THIS IS AN AWFULLY STEEP HILL.
YE-E-OW!

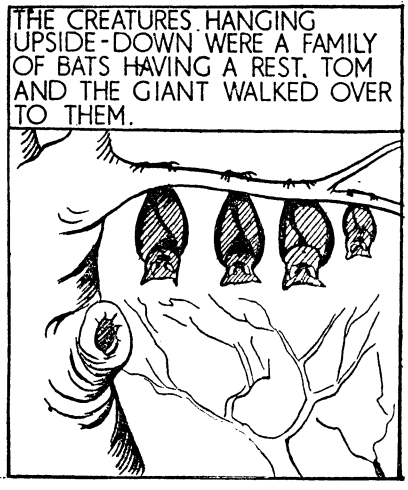
IS *EVERYONE* CRAZY THIS MORNING — OR IS IT JUST ME !
!?

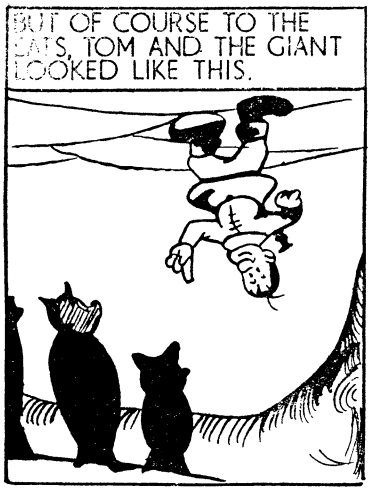
MEANWHILE FURRY HAS AWAKENED TO LEARN THAT HE HAS BEEN LEFT BEHIND. SO HE RACES AWAY FROM THE TOWN, TURNS RIGHT AT THE OLD OAK, GOES THROUGH WITCHES WOOD AND NARROW GULCH, AND—


CROSSES THE RIVER.

AFTER A TRIP LIKE THAT, HE DECIDED IT WAS TIME HE HAD ANOTHER LITTLE SLEEP. 'BECAUSE,' SAID FURRY, 'YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL NEED A LITTLE ENERGY.'

FURTHER UP THE ROAD.
OOH LOOK TOM ! THERE ARE SOME LITTLE CREATURES OVER THERE HANGING UPSIDE-DOWN.

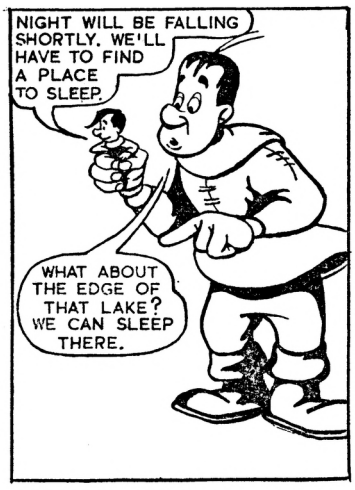

THE CREATURES HANGING UPSIDE-DOWN WERE A FAMILY OF BATS HAVING A REST. TOM AND THE GIANT WALKED OVER TO THEM.

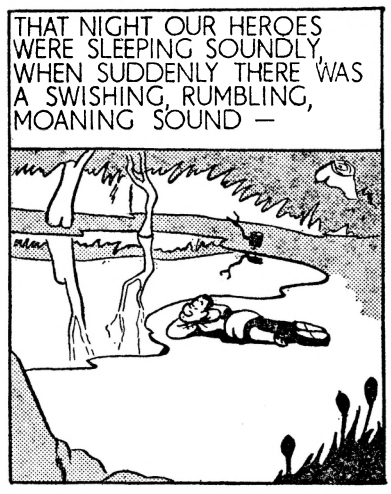

BUT OF COURSE TO THE BATS, TOM AND THE GIANT LOOKED LIKE THIS.

GOOD DAY ! CAN YOU TELL US WHERE WE CAN FIND THE PLACE WHERE EVERYTHING IS UPSIDE-DOWN ?

DON'T BE SILLY. EVERYTHING IS UPSIDE DOWN. YOU'RE UPSIDE-DOWN. WE'RE THE ONLY PEOPLE THE RIGHT WAY UP. YOU *ARE* SILLY !

I DON'T KNOW! EVERY TIME WE ASK THE WAY TO THE UPSIDE-DOWN TOWN PEOPLE THINK WE'RE SILLY!
SOMETIMES I THINK WE'LL NEVER FIND THE PLACE.


NIGHT WILL BE FALLING SHORTLY. WE'LL HAVE TO FIND A PLACE TO SLEEP.
WHAT ABOUT THE EDGE OF THAT LAKE? WE CAN SLEEP THERE.

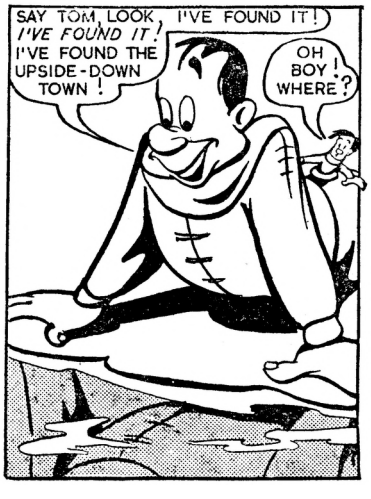

THAT NIGHT OUR HEROES WERE SLEEPING SOUNDLY, WHEN SUDDENLY THERE WAS A SWISHING, RUMBLING, MOANING SOUND —

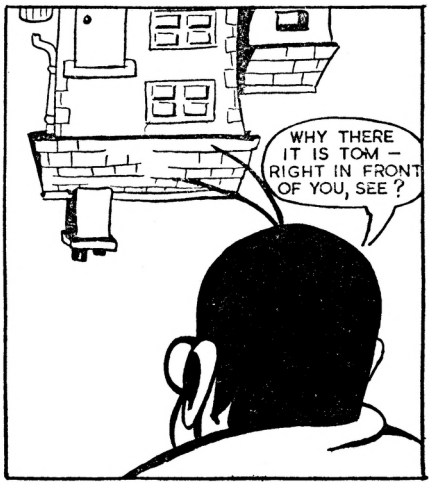
AND SOMETHING WHIRLED PAST INTO THE SHADOWS.

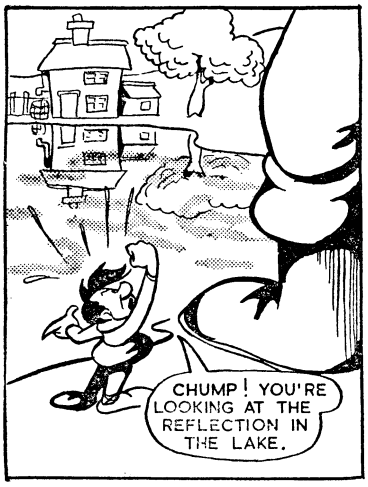
THIS NEARLY AWOKE TOM. BUT HE WAS NOT TO LEARN WHAT IT WAS TILL NEXT DAY.
EH? (SLEEPY) WHA-WAZ 'AT? SOMETHING JUST WEN' BY IN TH — SNORE.

SOMETHING ELSE WENT BY IN THE NIGHT. IT WAS FURRY, AWAKE FOR A SHORT WHILE, TRYING TO CATCH UP WITH HIS FRIENDS.
AND IN THE DARK, RAN STRAIGHT PAST THEM.

THEN CAME THE DAWN, AND THE GIANT SLOWLY OPENED HIS EYES.


SAY TOM, LOOK, I'VE FOUND IT! I'VE FOUND IT! I'VE FOUND THE UPSIDE-DOWN TOWN!
OH BOY! WHERE?

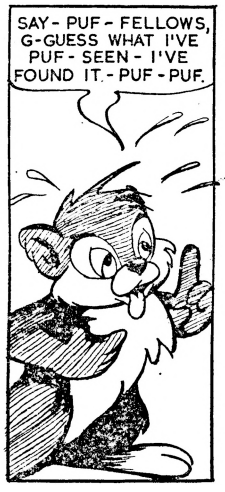

WHY THERE IT IS TOM — RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU, SEE?


CHUMP! YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE REFLECTION IN THE LAKE.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA OF RAISING MY HOPES LIKE THAT?
I'M SORRY, TOM. HONEST I AM.

I WONDER WHAT ALL THESE TREES ARE DOING ALL BROKEN AND UPROOTED?
HO HUM.
SO ONCE MORE OUR TWO HEROES SET OUT ON THEIR HOPELESS TASK.

SUDDENLY —
HEY! HEY!


SAY- PUF- FELLOWS, G-GUESS WHAT I'VE PUF- SEEN- I'VE FOUND IT.- PUF- PUF.

I'VE JUST SEEN AN- (YAWN) - DEAR ME, I'M TIRED. BEEN RUNNING, YOU KNOW.

I'VE JUST SEEN AN- SNORE.
HEY! THIS IS NO TIME TO GO TO SLEEP!

EH? OH- YES! THE UPSIDE- DOWN TOWN IS JUST UP THE ROAD!

COME ON! WE'VE FOUND THE UPSIDE- DOWN TOWN!
ZZZ

PERHAPS IT'S JUST OVER THIS HILL, TOM.
YES. BUT THESE BROKEN TREES STILL PUZZLE ME.

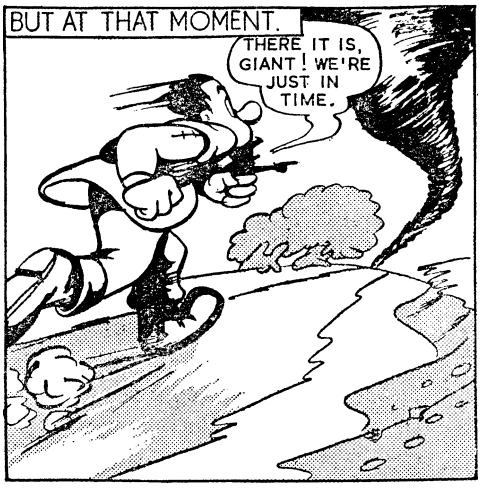
YES LOOK THERE IT IS!
C'MON! WE'D BETTER GO AND ASK WHERE THE POT OF GOLD IS!
ER-EXCUSE ME. COULD YOU TELL US WHERE WE CAN FIND THE POT OF GOLD?
THERE'S NO POT OF GOLD IN THIS TOWN, SONNY. WE'RE BROKE.
BUT THIS IS THE UPSIDE-DOWN TOWN, ISN'T IT?
IT'S AN UPSIDE-DOWN TOWN TO-DAY, BOY! BUT IT WASN'T YESTERDAY. YOU SEE DURING THE NIGHT A WHIRLWIND CAME ALONG AND SUCKED EVERYTHING UP!
MILE
AND THEN DUMPED IT DOWN AGAIN – THE WRONG WAY UP. IT WILL TAKE YEARS TO PUT IT RIGHT AGAIN.
A WHIRLWIND!!! BUT THAT MUST BE THE THING THAT WENT BY DURING THE NIGHT.
DOESN'T THAT MEAN THAT THE WHIRLWIND IS HEADING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE KING'S PALACE AND YOUR HOME TOWN?
YES, OF COURSE. THE PALACE WILL BE WRECKED. COME ON! WE MUST GET BACK BEFORE THE WHIRLWIND GETS THERE!

LEAVING FURRY, TOM AND THE GIANT RACED BACK THE WAY THEY HAD COME.
z z Z z

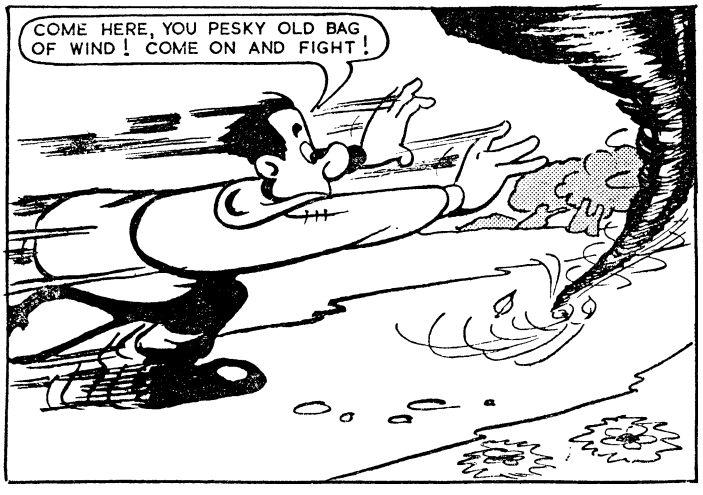
IT'S A WHIRLWIND!
LET'S ALL RUN FOR OUR LIVES!
IT'S TOO LATE. THERE'S NO TIME. WE SHALL ALL BE KILLED.

MEANWHILE THE NEWS HAS REACHED THE KING OF THE WHIRLWIND'S APPROACH.
A WHIRLWIND!
THE TOWN WILL BE WRECKED!
OH DEAR. WHAT ON EARTH ARE WE GOING TO DO?

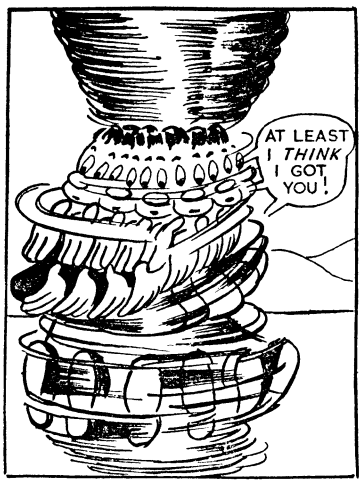
IF ONLY WE HADN'T GOT RID OF THE GIANT. HE'S SO BIG AND STRONG, HE COULD DEAL WITH THE SITUATION!

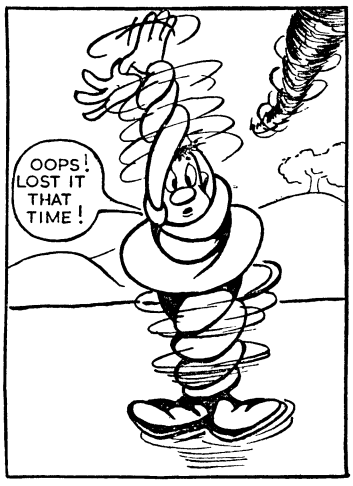

BUT AT THAT MOMENT.
THERE IT IS, GIANT! WE'RE JUST IN TIME.

I'LL JUST PUT YOU DOWN WHILE I DEAL WITH IT.


COME HERE, YOU PESKY OLD BAG OF WIND! COME ON AND FIGHT!

GOT YOU!

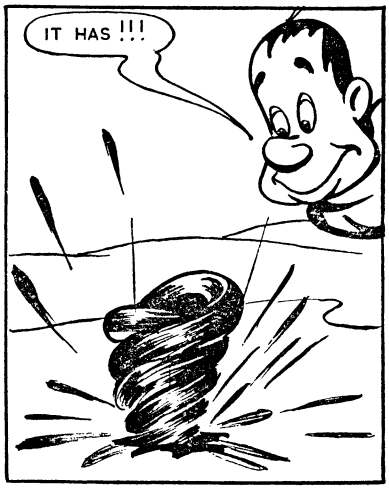

AT LEAST I *THINK* I GOT YOU!


OOPS! LOST IT THAT TIME!

WHAT CAN I DO NOW? I KNOW - - IF I GET HOLD OF IT AND -

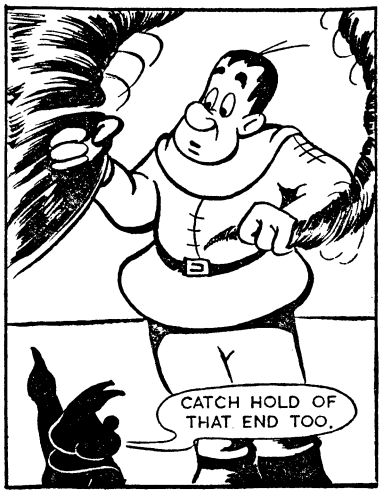
PUT A SORT OF SCREW THREAD ON IT -

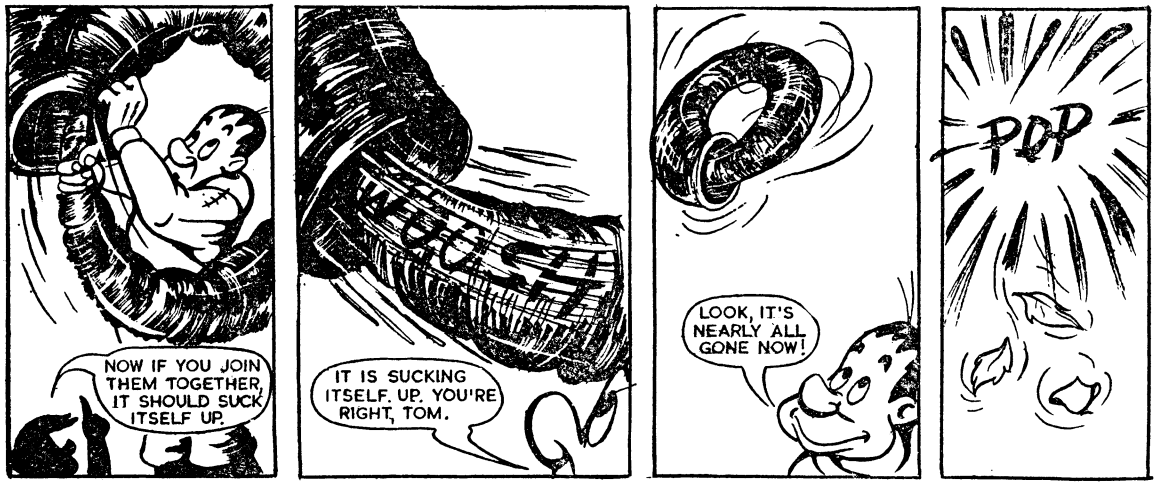
PERHAPS IT WILL SCREW ITSELF INTO THE GROUND

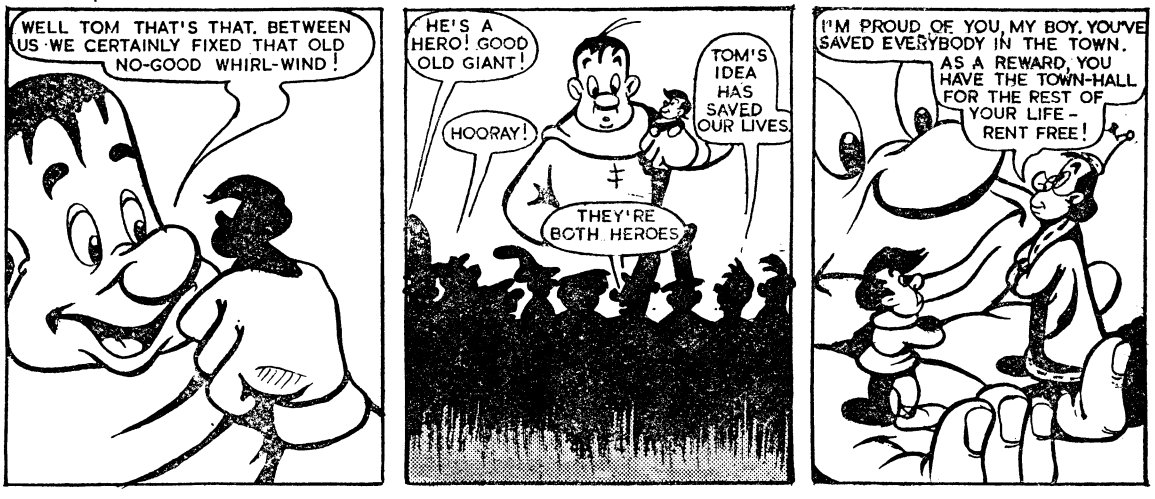

IT HAS !!!

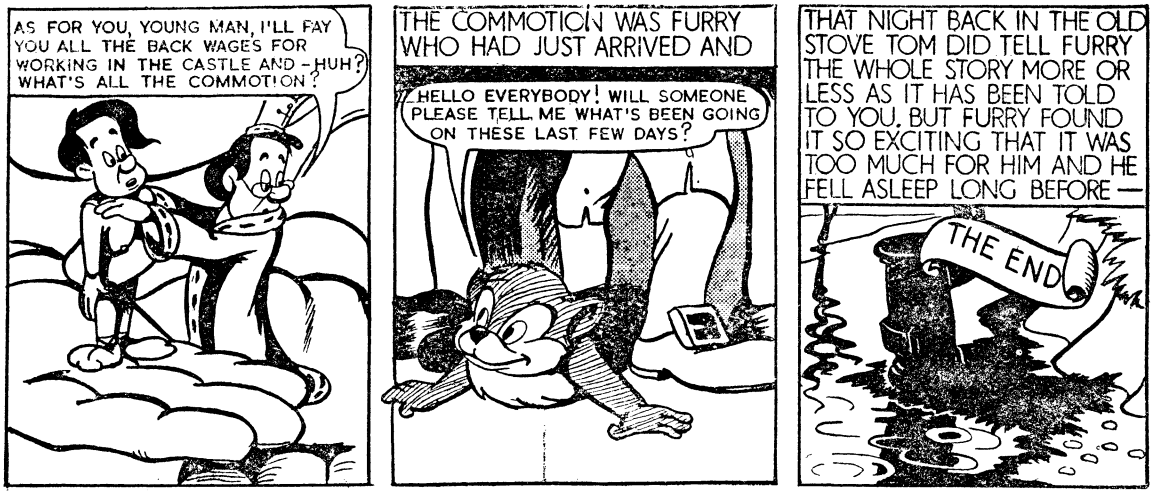
HEY GIANT! IT'S COMING UP AGAIN OVER HERE!

THEN TOM HAD AN IDEA.
LOOK GIANT, GET HOLD OF THIS END OF IT HERE - THEN WAIT FOR THE OTHER END TO COME UP, AND -


CATCH HOLD OF THAT END TOO.

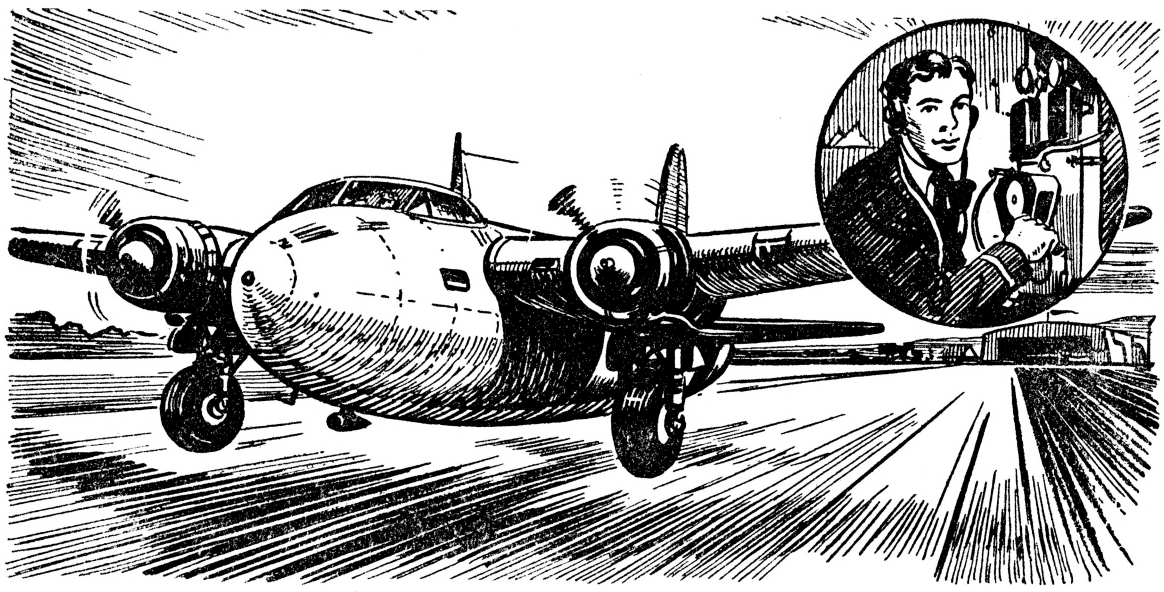

NOW IF YOU JOIN THEM TOGETHER, IT SHOULD SUCK ITSELF UP.
IT IS SUCKING ITSELF UP. YOU'RE RIGHT, TOM.
LOOK, IT'S NEARLY ALL GONE NOW!
POP


WELL TOM THAT'S THAT. BETWEEN US WE CERTAINLY FIXED THAT OLD NO-GOOD WHIRL-WIND!
HE'S A HERO! GOOD OLD GIANT!
HOORAY!
TOM'S IDEA HAS SAVED OUR LIVES.
THEY'RE BOTH HEROES.
I'M PROUD OF YOU, MY BOY. YOU'VE SAVED EVERYBODY IN THE TOWN. AS A REWARD, YOU HAVE THE TOWN-HALL FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE - RENT FREE!


AS FOR YOU, YOUNG MAN, I'LL PAY YOU ALL THE BACK WAGES FOR WORKING IN THE CASTLE AND - HUH? WHAT'S ALL THE COMMOTION?
THE COMMOTION WAS FURRY WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED AND
HELLO EVERYBODY! WILL SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON THESE LAST FEW DAYS?
THAT NIGHT BACK IN THE OLD STOVE TOM DID TELL FURRY THE WHOLE STORY MORE OR LESS AS IT HAS BEEN TOLD TO YOU. BUT FURRY FOUND IT SO EXCITING THAT IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR HIM AND HE FELL ASLEEP LONG BEFORE —
THE END

MIKE

GOOD NIGHT, MUM, I'M OFF TO BED NOW!
GOOD NIGHT, MIKE! OH, BE A GOOD BOY AND CALL THE CAT IN BEFORE YOU GO!
HEY, SQUIBS! COME ON IN LIKE A GOOD PUSSY CAT! BAH! HE'S NOWHERE IN SIGHT!
BOTHER! I'LL HAVE TO WALK ROUND THE GARDEN AND LOOK FOR HIM! HEY! PUSS! PUSS!
HI, SQUIBS, WHERE ARE YOU ??? PUSS! PUSS! PUSS! PUSS!
OH BOTHER, - NOW IT'S STARTING TO RAIN! SQUIBS! PUSS! PUSS!
PUSS! PUSS! PUSS! COME ON, SQUIBS, WHERE ARE YOU?
BAH! THE SILLY CAT! HE JUST WON'T COME! OH DEAR, I'M GETTING SOAKED TO THE SKIN! PUSS! PUSS!
AT-CHOO! (SNIFF!) BAH, SQUIBS CAN STAY OUT ALL NIGHT FOR ALL I CARE! — I'M GOING IN BEFORE I CATCH MY DEATH OF COLD!
(AT-CHOO-O-O!!) SILLY ANIMALS CATS! - THEY DON'T KNOW ENOUGH TO COME IN OUT OF THE RAIN! (AT-CHOO!!)
(PURR-PURR!)
ZZZZ!



When the big 'Freighter' took off for Abadan, nobody knew that it carried

LIVE CARGO!

A Gripping Story of Thrills in the Air

By JAMES HART

The Getaway

THREE men sat in the gleaming saloon car that slid to a halt on the lonely country road. The hour was well after midnight. Calm moonlight silvered the trees and the wild heathland surrounding it.

The man at the driving wheel pointed forward through the windscreen. Against the lighter sky beyond a fringe of trees showed the unmistakable shapes of aircraft hangars. A windsock flopped against its pole, for there was little wind.

The man sitting beside the driver was trembling. Mike Ripoli was a badly-frightened man. Once he had looked upon himself as a king—monarch of London's underworld. Now he looked the rat he was—a hunted rat.

"What have you brought me here for, Sully?" he said hoarsely. "This is no good to me. I want to get out of England—quickly."

Sully, plump and prosperous, called himself an importer and exporter. Some of his business was genuine. He spoke in his fat, oily tones.

"I know that, Mike. The police of all Britain are looking out for you. You made your biggest mistake in shooting that policeman. Guns always bring trouble. Now every seaport and airport in Britain is being watched. That's why I've brought you here. Come on, let's get out. But be quiet about it."

The third man, named "Weasel" Sime, followed Sully and Ripoli out of the car. He strained to carry a heavy bag of tools as they walked on the grass verge, found a hole in the

hedge, and went towards the hangars. They were dark and silent. One light showed, high in the control tower.

"This was a disused R.A.F. landing ground," Sully said quietly. "Now it's used by a small air charter company—Thane Flyways. They've carried stuff for me. They carry all kinds of freight—from a packet of diamonds to a couple of elephants."

"What's that got to do with me?" hissed Ripoli, his black eyes flickering as he gazed fearfully around him. "I'm not freight! D'you mean they can be bribed?"

"They can't," said Sully easily. "But you could be smuggled, Mike! It's your only chance."

He led the way to a long, low storehouse. It was locked, but they broke in silently and with the ease of specialists at this craft, aided by the tools in Weasel's bag. Inside, Sully flashed the narrow beam of a pencil-like torch. Mike Ripoli found himself gazing at a huge packing case that towered in the centre of the shed. It was as large as a shack itself, and was marked in big, stencilled letters: "To Gulf Oil Company, Abadan."

"Abadan," said Sully. "In the oilfields at the head of the Persian Gulf. That ought to be far enough away for you, Mike."

"You're not telling me they're going to fly that great crate all that way!" gasped the fugitive.

"That's nothing to Thane Flyways," said Sully calmly. "They'll manage that, but this time they'll have some extra weight they don't bargain for. Weasel, get your tools out. Make a hole in that crate—and make it neat, quick and quiet!"

The Stowaway

SOON after dawn the same morning, three people stood looking at the crate for Abadan. They were Martin Thane, head of Thane Flyways, and his two sons, Norman and Billy.

Norman, lean, quiet, was Thane's best pilot. His brother, Billy, several years younger, and not yet seventeen, was not yet working for the firm, but he was already crazy about aircraft and flying.

"There it is," said Martin Thane, rubbing his strong chin. "It's got to leave for Abadan in an hour. It contains urgent pumping machinery for one of the oilfields."

"There's only one of our craft that'll take it," said Norman. "'The Pig.'"

"The old flying furniture van?" exclaimed Billy, his eager eyes glancing out through the sliding doors to the old freight plane which stood on the tarmac not far away.

'The Pig' had a single high wing, and a control cockpit perched high above a great bulbous fuselage. It was slow, but its two powerful engines hauled it to its destination with a heavy load in a somewhat cumbersome manner. It was not easy to fly, and Norman was not the only Thane Flyways pilot who called it 'The Pig.'

"That's it," said Martin Thane. "It's your assignment, Norman. The only problem is, finding a radio operator to fly with you. All our crews are out, and Charley, the only spare op., has gone sick."

"Dad!" exclaimed Billy. "Let me go! You know I've always wanted to go on one of these long trips. I haven't passed for my radio operator's licence yet, but I can handle the set."

"No, son," said Martin Thane gruffly. "Your exam's in a week's time, and you've still got some swotting to do."

"Oh, *Dad*! We'll be back easily by then. Besides, think of the practical experience I'll get."

Norman chuckled.

"Let him come, Dad. I'll look after him—and see that he works. Besides, we *are* in a spot over the radio end."

Martin Thane sighed. "I can't fight against both of you," he said. "Come on, let's load this crate. We'll have to use the breakdown lorry and its crane."

Soon the crate was being driven slowly towards the freighter. Hanging on the crane, it swung slowly from one side to the other, to the discomfiture of the man who crouched inside it, crammed up against the machinery, and peering out through the air holes which had been thoughtfully left by his friends.

Two great doors in the nose of the freighter were already open. The crate was swung down to rest on a ramp leading into the cargo compartment, and hauled and pushed on rollers by all three Thanes and

members of their ground staff. At last it was safely inside, taking up most of the cargo space, the tyres of the freighter's tricycle undercarriage bulging outwards under the extra weight.

"That's all right then," said Martin Thane, wiping his forehead. "You can leave when you like, Norman. Don't let young Billy chase about too much in Abadan. It gets mighty hot down there!"

Soon Norman and Billy climbed to the pilot's cockpit.

Billy was quivering with excitement. He had flown over parts of the locality in light training planes, and had even had lessons in flying. But this was to be his first long trip overseas. Places like Marseilles, Tripoli, Cairo, and the long desert stretches rose in his mind. He would see them all now!

The plane rolled wildly, both wings dipping crazily in turn.

He settled at the radio operator's place behind his brother, the pilot. The plane quivered as the engines roared into life. Then, his father, standing waving, seemed to be sliding away backwards.

The plane gathered speed and rushed bumping across the airfield. Then the bumping ceased, and he knew the big freighter was airborne with its heavy cargo.

Anxiously he stared ahead over Norman's shoulder, his gaze fixed on a line of spiky pine trees on the edge of the airfield. They seemed to be rushing towards the plane.

Billy Thane felt the hair at the back of his neck rise as the treetops passed just below them.

Norman flashed a smile over his shoulder.

"Tricky getting off with this weight, Billy! We only just made it."

Billy swallowed hard and tried to appear unconcerned.

He watched the fields, the rivers, the woods, and the towns and villages of Southern England passing below them as the freighter steadily gained height.

Then they were passing over the English Channel, blue and misty and marked by the white wakes of ships going to and from London. They roared over the French coast, over the rich farmlands of Normandy, and then Billy thrilled as he saw, far away, the Eiffel Tower stabbing into the sky over Paris.

He was listening all the time. The air on the aircraft wave-length was full of messages. He picked up the weather report from Le Bourget, the airport for Paris. Heavy cloud formations were reported to be rolling from the east, but now Norman changed course and headed more directly south.

On and on they flew over France until they picked up the great valley of the River Rhone, winding southwards, and this they followed. The excitement was wearing off for Billy now. He was settling down to his job.

At somewhere around 150 m.p.h. the freighter trundled on, flying at five thousand feet. They passed over the great city of Lyons and soon Norman pointed away to the left. Billy saw great foothills rolling up in wave after wave to snow-capped peaks.

"The French Alps," said Norman as Billy leaned close to listen to him. "We have to skirt that lot in this old plane."

It was barely half an hour later that Norman signalled to him again. He was pointing dead ahead this time. Billy looked and saw a vast wall of blackness lying across their path. It was suddenly split by a jagged flash of lightning.

"Bad weather in front," said Norman laconically. "We're in for a pounding, young Billy!"

"Can't you climb over it?" asked Billy.

"Not with this load," said Norman. "And it's no use going down, either. It extends almost down to ground level. Visibility—ten-tenths cloud!" he added with a wry grin.

It was obvious to Billy that they'd have to fly straight through the murk and trust to luck that it wasn't too deep.

Next moment the whole atmosphere seemed to grow colder. The freighter had plunged straight into the black clouds. It began to rock, and only Norman's steady hands and feet kept it on an even keel. Billy saw alertness in every line of his shoulders.

He clung tightly to his table to prevent himself being thrown about the cockpit. The engines droned steadily. Then a blue flash ripped right across in front of the windscreen, now swilling with rain. Billy was momentarily blinded. He was sure he could smell sulphur.

"Are we struck?" he bawled to Norman.

"No?" came the shouted reply. "But it was mighty close!"

Again the blackness around them was split by streaking lightning flashes. The plane rolled wildly, both wings dipping crazily in turn. Then it dropped like a stone for a hundred feet, and Billy grabbed wildly as he felt the radio table dropping away from him.

His stomach seemed to come up into his throat, then his spine jarred as the plane finished its wild earthward descent.

"Golly!" he breathed. "I thought the wings were going to fall off."

Still the engines roared. Cumbersome though it was, the old plane had a good heart. He saw Norman signal to him, and bent close.

"We're getting a bit of a pounding," his brother said. "I'm worried about that crate down below. If it's getting thrown about, it might smash through the fuselage—then we should be in a fix! You might also take a look at the spare radio down there, too!"

"Leave it to me," exclaimed Billy. He made his way across the wildly-rocking floor of the cockpit to a small door that opened on to a short flight of steps leading down into the cargo compartment.

The plane tilted as he opened the door, and he nearly pitched head first down into the compartment. But he hung on grimly, and climbed backwards down the ladder, clinging tightly. The door slammed shut above him.

The cargo space was lit by a couple of electric bulbs. He came to the bottom of the ladder, and turned round to look at the big crate, one hand still gripping the rungs.

Everything seemed all right, at first. He sat down before the spare radio and put on the earphones. Then things happened!

Two planks were suddenly kicked out of the crate. He saw a man's grim face—and a hand holding an automatic pistol which was pointed straight at himself.

Billy stared, wordlessly, too startled even to cry out.

Mike Ripoli was not very good to look at at the best of times. Now he looked even worse. He had been air-sick, and his face was pale green, of a particularly ghastly hue. His appearance was not improved by the trickle of blood that ran down from a cut on his forehead where he had struck his head against the machinery in the crate.

The fugitive had not enjoyed his flight in the crate, and the crazy antics of the plane in

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT!

Answers to Quizzes on Page 94.

1. A Terrier gets its name from the French word, "Terrier," meaning a rabbit-hole. These dogs follow the rabbits into their holes.
2. A Glacier is NOT a frozen river, but a river of ice. The ice formed from compressed snow.

the bad weather had just about finished him off. He had been saying a lot of harsh things about his pal, Sully.

" Come over here, you ! " he said gratingly to Billy, who stared at him tensely. " Pull some more of these boards away, and get me out. And no tricks—or I'll drill you ! "

Lost Control

IT was the first time Billy had seen an automatic pistol. The man who held it looked capable of carrying out his threat. Billy stared at the blue-black muzzle of the gun, which seemed to be pointed straight at his heart.

" Who—who are you ? " he said with an effort.

" Never mind ! " snarled Mike Ripoli. " Get me out of here ! "

Cautiously Billy discarded the earphones and went towards the crate. He was closer now to the gun, and he could look right into the glittering black eyes of the stowaway. What he saw convinced him that it was no good trying to fool about with this stranger, or expecting mercy.

He began tearing at the boards in the side of the crate, and soon Mike Ripoli, still covering the boy with his automatic, wriggled through. He stood half-crouched, and motioned to Billy with the gun.

" O.K. Climb up again ! " he ordered.

Billy had his hands on the rungs of the ladder when some instinct warned him. He ducked, half-turning his head as he did so. The butt of the automatic, swishing down, struck him a glancing blow on the head and thudded down painfully on his shoulders. Stunned, he fell sideways, his hands slipping from the ladder, and collapsed in a corner of the cargo compartment.

" Didn't hit him fair and square," muttered Mike Ripoli, " but he's out all right. Now to see who else is up there."

Billy saw a man's grim face—and a gun levelled straight at himself.

The floor of the plane had stopped rocking and dipping. Mike Ripoli climbed to the little door, opened it cautiously, and looked through into the pilot's cabin. His lips twisted in a grin as he saw that there was only one man there.

Sunshine flooded into the pilot's cockpit. The plane had passed through the bad weather belt. Norman Thane sat relaxed in his seat. He had no warning of danger—until something round and cold pressed against the side of his neck.

He twisted his head round, and saw the strained black eyes and haggard face of Mike

Ripoli, with the dried trickle of blood zig-zagging down it.

"Keep flying, brother," grated Mike Ripoli.

Norman's brain raced, but he kept his voice and expression cool.

"So we had a stowaway, eh?" he remarked. "There's no need for the gun. I wouldn't throw you overboard."

"Shut your trap," said Mike Ripoli. "I'll do the talking."

"I'm skipper of this craft," said Norman easily, "and I like to know what's going on." His voice took on a sharper edge. "What have you done to my brother?"

"He's all right," grinned Mike Ripoli down into the cool grey eyes of the pilot. "But he'll have a sore head when he wakes up."

The grey eyes hardened. "If anything's happened to Billy——"

"You'll be able to do nothing!" rasped the stowaway. He glanced out of the nearest window. Below were brown hills, with beyond them a sprawling city—and beyond that blue sea stretching to the horizon. "What's that place?"

"That," said Norman Thane evenly, "is Marseilles—and for your information I'm going to land there."

"For your information, you're not," growled Mike Ripoli. "I don't want to land at Marseilles—it's not far enough away from England for me. And I'm boss now on this aircraft!"

For a moment there sounded only the steady roar of the engines. Norman glanced at the gun, then up at Mike Ripoli, studying his features.

"All right, you're the boss," he said. "We'll fly on until we run out of petrol—than we'll just go down in one nice big crash." His brain was racing, trying to think of some way of outwitting this unpleasant-looking stranger. Also, he was worried about his young brother. How badly was Billy hurt?

"I've a notion I've seen your ugly mug somewhere," Norman went on.

"Less of the ugly!" snarled Mike Ripoli, who had a high opinion of his looks.

"I remember now," said Norman, not looking at the man with the gun, but staring straight ahead. They had passed high over Marseilles now, and the Mediterranean lay ahead, and below. "I saw your picture in a newspaper. You're some rotten crook who was wanted for shooting a policeman during a smash-and-grab raid."

"Now you know!" snapped Mike Ripoli, "And it gets you nowhere—except that it proves I'll shoot you just as quick."

"And that gets you nowhere," grinned Norman tensely. "Because if you shoot me, this plane will just go down out of control."

"I'll take my chance on that," yelled Mike Ripoli. "Listen—you! You're flying straight on to North Africa, see? You're going to land in the desert over there—somewhere near a big town. Then I'm going to walk away from this plane, and I'm going to find transport and make my way to a place called Tangier, which is in Spanish Morocco. They tell me it's an international zone, and a feller like me could make a nice living there. In fact, I've got friends who're doing very well there."

"And if I won't let you walk away from the plane, even if we have enough petrol to fly to, say, Algiers—and land?"

"Your young brother is going to walk away with me," grated Mike Ripoli, "and my gun is going to be in my pocket, pointing at him—and he's going to get shot if you make a move before I'm well away!"

The threat was real, but the man's words brought relief to Norman. So Billy was alive, anyway!

"You've got it all worked out, haven't you?" he said.

Unobtrusively he was edging the control column back. The altimeter needle was registering a gradual climb, but Mike's eyes were busy with Norman, not the bewildering collection of gauges and dials, which he did not understand. Norman was gaining height, because he needed plenty of height for a move his cool brain was now planning.

"I've got it all worked out," repeated Mike with satisfaction. "I don't want to go to this Abadan place, which is too far away and too hot—and besides, I might have to work for a living. A place like Tangier, where I can settle down to a nice little racket,

with nobody to worry me, suits me much better."

Norman listened, but said nothing. He was gazing stonily ahead, but he was preparing a move against his unsavoury passenger. The freighter was not fitted with an automatic pilot; but Norman had a contrivance of his own which he used in good weather on long flights to give himself a rest. It consisted of straps which secured the control column.

He was working at these now, and Mike Ripoli, lolling back, the gun pointed at Norman's back, and congratulating himself that he had the whiphand, had no inkling of what the pilot was doing.

The heavily-laden plane was now flying well over the open sea. It cruised among fleecy white clouds far above the blue Mediterranean, sometimes forging through them so that they broke in white vapour against the forward windscreen.

Norman set the throttle for a steady speed; his feet set the rudder-bar; he made sure that the straps held the control column upright. Provided it did not run into a bad patch of turbulent air, the freighter could now be left to its own devices for a short while.

Suddenly Norman took a deep breath, and leaped backwards and sideways from his seat in a turning, crouching motion, his hands grabbing for Mike Ripoli.

His shoulder struck the startled crook and sent him reeling across the cabin. Ripoli crashed against a girder of the fuselage, and as he did so his finger tightened on the trigger of his automatic.

The bullet struck Norman on the shoulder even as he hurled himself after Mike Ripoli. The impact swung him round.

He reeled sideways and fell sprawling across his seat and against the control column. The straps snapped under his weight, and the control column was pushed right forward. Down went the nose of the plane, and the engines revved crazily as it began to plunge towards the sea thousands of feet below.

Mike Ripoli, his face paper-white now, lurched towards Norman, falling across him, and grabbing and tearing at his jacket.

"Stop it!" he shrieked. "We'll be killed! Stop it!"

And at that moment Billy Thane, his face white and strained, flung open the door from the cargo compartment and almost fell through into the crazily-tilting cockpit.

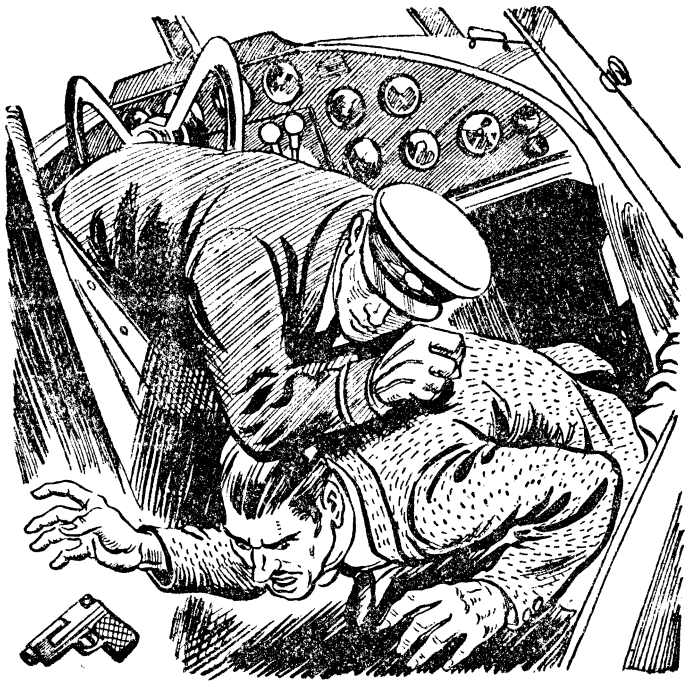
Happy Landing

BILLY Thane had come-to down in the cargo space to find his head aching and throbbing, and his shoulder feeling as if it were a mass of bruises.

At first his eyes hurt when he opened them. His head swam; then as he gritted his teeth and painfully hauled himself upright from the corner into which he was crammed, his brain began to clear. He still felt slightly sick, and his head was one big ache, but he remembered enough to be thankful he had dodged the stowaway's vicious blow.

Had it taken him square on the back of his head he might never have come to at all.

"What's happening?" he muttered. "How long have I been knocked silly?"



Norman hurled himself at Mike Ripoli.

He stood up, holding on to the rungs of the ladder. He heard the steady beat of the engines, so the plane was still flying. Norman must be all right! Unless, he thought in a sudden panic, the man who had hit him could pilot a plane, too. He might have shot Norman!

Gritting his teeth, Billy began climbing the ladder. He had just opened the little door to look through cautiously when he heard the sudden crack of the shot—and then he was lurching forward through the opening as the plane's nose tilted.

He caught a glimpse of the stowaway, half-sprawling, half-bending over Norman's form. He heard him screaming: "Stop it! You're not hurt bad! Do something! We'll hit the sea!"

Then Billy was flung forward. He went shooting down the sloping floor, unable to stop himself. Both fists, bunched in front of him, struck Mike Ripoli on the side of the jaw, knocking him sprawling off Norman.

Billy banged painfully up against the back of the pilot's seat as Mike Ripoli, half-stunned, slid in a heap down into the nose of the plane. The crook's head struck one of the frame girders. He grunted once, then went limp, lying sprawled like a sack.

The roar of the plane's engines was still dinning in Billy's ears. Hanging on the back of the seat, he pulled himself up. Norman had slid off it.

Billy knew what he had to do.

He had, somehow, to get the freighter on an even keel. He wormed his way into the seat, gripped the control column with both hands, and pulled back. His feet found the rudder bar.

His eyes stared ahead, down at the sea, which seemed to be rushing up to meet them. The controls felt soggy. They did not respond to his straining muscles. Then he felt them bite. With sweat on his pale forehead, he strained his legs against the rudder bar, and pulled back mightily on the control column with both arms.

With agonising slowness, the plane's nose came up. The sea tilted before him. Slowly the plane righted itself, until the sea was no longer rushing up, but stretched away ahead to the horizon. In a few more moments the plane was flying on an even keel, and Billy let out a gasp. They were flying at about five hundred feet above the water—and he was bathed in cold sweat.

"Good for you, young Bill!" a voice exclaimed.

He looked sideways, to see Norman sitting up. His face was pale, and he was clutching his shoulder, which showed a patch of red staining his jacket—but he was smiling wryly.

"Oh, Norman! I thought he'd killed you!" Billy cried.

"We Thanes are tough," grinned Norman. A spasm of pain passed across his face. "Here, I'll take over the controls now."

"But—your shoulder!"

"You can fix that for me after," said Norman. "After you've roped up our friend here in case he gets any more silly ideas."

So Norman sat at the controls with one shoulder stiff and aching, holding the control column with one hand and gritting his teeth as his senses swam. And Billy busied himself with rope from a locker, binding the unconscious Mike Ripoli so securely that he resembled an Egyptian mummy.

"He'll do!" exclaimed Norman. "Now you'd better put a first-aid dressing on my shoulder."

So 'The Pig' bumbled on at its steady pace not five hundred feet above the wave-tops of the Mediterranean, winging steadily towards the North African coast, while Billy, forgetting his aching head, padded and bandaged its pilot's shoulder.

"That's better," remarked Norman at last. "Now I'll have a rest, and you can take the plane for a while. I'll take over for the landing—because with all due respect, young Bill, I don't think you could land this clumsy old lump of machinery without having a first-class pile-up!"

While Billy sat at the controls, Norman leaned over Mike Ripoli. The stowaway was unable to move. Only his eyes moved, flickering in hatred from Norman to his brother.

"Well, you're going to land at Tripoli, as you wanted," Norman remarked. "But not in the open desert. We're going to land at Castel Benito, which is a very nice airport—

and there we'll find some airport police who'll be only too pleased to give you free transport back to Britain. You'll like that, won't you ? "

Mike Ripoli said nothing, but his black eyes spoke volumes.

" He doesn't seem to like the idea, Norman ! " laughed Billy.

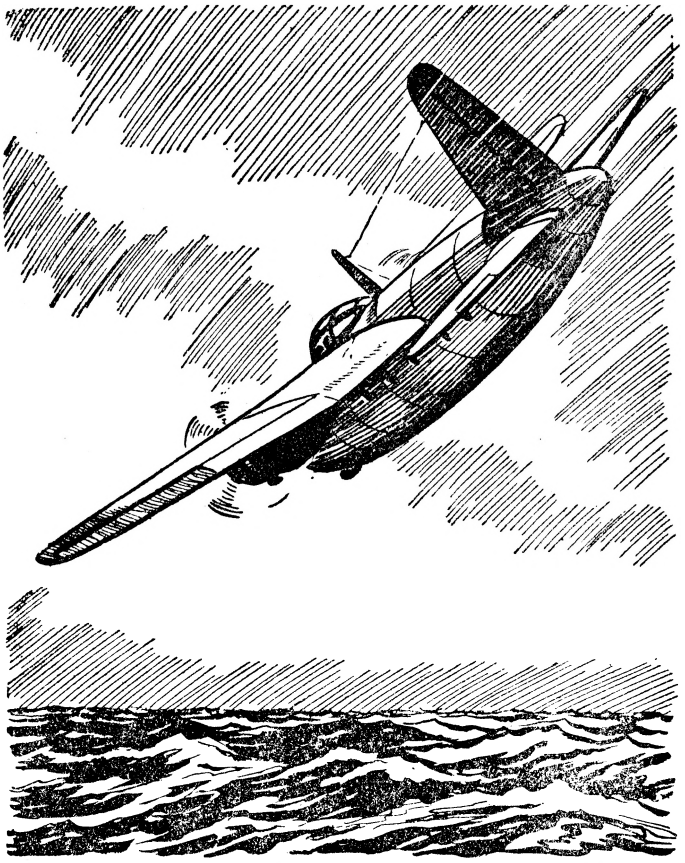
Some time later the freighter circled over the white buildings of the city of Tripoli, and went dropping down slowly towards the sun-baked airfield at Castel Benito. Norman, who had taken over the controls for the landing, pointed to the fuel gauge as the great aircraft came to rest on the tarmac and the airscrews clanked to a standstill. The needle was at zero.

" I was worried about that, Billy," he said quietly. " But we just made it."

Several hours later the two Thane brothers watched Mike Ripoli, handcuffed and guarded by a burly plain-clothes man, board a B.O.A.C. air-liner bound for Britain.

Then they walked across to their old freighter. Norman felt fit enough to take her into the air. For long stretches Billy could take over the controls under his supervision to give him a rest.

Little matters such as a wounded shoulder and a still-aching head were not enough to stop the Thane brothers. They were on an urgent air charter job for Abadan. The freight must go through. Besides, Billy Thane hadn't seen Cairo yet.



The sea seemed to be rushing up to meet them !

THE END

Solution to Pictorial Crossword on page 104

ACROSS. Ram (Rabbit, Apple, Moon). Pool (Pail, Owl, Octagon, Label). Romp (Ribbon, Oil, Mushroom, Pin) Art (Axe, Rice, Two). Aga (Apron, Grapes, Apple). Inky (Ice, Net, Knot, Yard). Ring (Raspberry, Island, Nine, Glass). Elk (Elbow, Lemon, Knee).

DOWN. Rule (Rabbit, Umbrella, Log, Egg). Osprey, (Owl, Star, Pin, Rice, Eight, Yard). Lap (Label, Ace, Pear). No (Nail, Oil). Region (Ribbon, Eye, Grapes, Ice, Orange, Nine). Ma (Mushroom, Axe). An (Apple, Net). Milk (Mop, Iron, Links, Knee). Air (Anchor, Ink, Raspberry). K.O. (Knot, One).

Solution to Pictorial Crossword on page 192

ACROSS. Ninety (Nut, Ice, Nail, Eye, Three, Yarn). Sun (Star, Umbrella, Nine). Am (Ant, Moon). Vetch (Valve, Egg, Tea, Cane, Hat). Me (Mushroom, Elbow). Ta (Two, Anchor). Camps (Cat, Ace, Mouse, Pie, Strap). It (Iron, Tin). One (Oil, Net, Egg). Sprang (Screw, Post, Ribbon, Nib, Glove).

DOWN. Numerals (Nut, Umbrella, Moon, Elbow, Raspberry, Ace, Lips, Screw). In (Ice, Nine). Ever (Eve, Violet, Egg, Rope). Yachting (Yarn, Apple, Cane, Hills, Two, Iron, Net, Glove). Sam (Star, Ant, Mushroom). Spar (Swan, Pie, Apple, Ribbon). Ate (Anchor, Tin, Egg). On (Oil, Nib).

SEXTON BLAKE and THE LOCH KYLE MONSTER

(Cont'd from P. 89)

NOBODY CONNECTED THE REPORTED MONSTER OF LOCH KYLE WITH THE THEFT OF THE OLD MASTER FROM BLAGDON HALL. BUT WHEN SEXTON BLAKE AND TINKER, PURSUING THE CROOKS, REACHED THE LOCH THE STRANGE RIPPLES WERE SEEN AGAIN!
IT'S THE MONSTER, RIGHT ENOUGH, MR. BLAKE, BUT WE CAN'T BE BOTHERED WITH HIM, NOW. WE'VE GOT TO FOLLOW THOSE CROOKS.
IN THAT CASE, WE SHALL NEED A BOAT, INSPECTOR.
BUT ALTHOUGH THEY ROWED ROUND THE LOCH THEY FOUND NO TRACE OF THE CROOKS OR THEIR BOAT!
IT BEATS ME! EVEN IF THEY GOT AWAY, THEMSELVES, WHAT HAVE THEY DONE WITH THEIR BOAT? THERE'S NO SIGN OF IT.
IT'S STRANGE. I THINK I'LL GET BACK TO BLAGDON HALL.
YOU SEE, THEY DID NOT STEAL THE OLD MASTER, BUT A COPY OF IT. WHEN THEY REALISE THEIR MISTAKE THEY MIGHT COME BACK. IN WHICH CASE, I WANT TO BE THERE. IF I NEED YOUR HELP, INSPECTOR I'LL LET YOU KNOW.
ON THE OTHER HAND, TINKER, DO YOU BELIEVE IN MONSTERS?
WELL, GUV'NOR, I TAKE THEM WITH A PINCH OF SALT. WHY DO YOU ASK?
THAT BOAT COULDN'T VANISH UNLESS IT SUNK. AS FOR THE MONSTER IT WAS LAST REPORTED GOING TOWARDS THE ISLAND. WE SAW IT LEAVING THE ISLAND. I THINK WE'LL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ISLAND.
CRUMBS! THIS IS HARD WORK! HAVEN'T YOU SPOTTED ANYTHING, YET, GUV'NOR?
LOOK! PULL IN TOWARDS THAT ARCH. AND TALK SOFTLY!

A BOAT COULD BE THRUST INTO THIS ARCH, BUT NOT WITH A MAN IN IT.
NO NEED, GUV'NOR. THERE'S FOOTPRINTS ON THIS ROCK!
KEEP CLOSE TO THE WALL, TINKER. MORE GRASS THERE AND WE'LL MAKE LESS NOISE.
GOSH! GUV'NOR---
HECK! A VISITOR! LOOK OUT!
NICE WORK, BEN! WONDER WHO HE IS?
EVER SEEN HIM BEFORE, BEN?
STRIKES ME FAMILAR BUT I CAN'T PLACE HIM. BETTER TIE HIM UP, TAKE HIM BELOW AND WAIT FOR THE BOSS TO COME BACK.
WHEN SEXTON BLAKE CAME TO HIS SENSES----
THINK THE BOSS WILL BE LONG, BEN?
IT JUST DEPENDS ON THE WEATHER. HE MIGHT GET BACK SOON OR HE MIGHT BE ANOTHER TWO OR THREE HOURS.

HE'S GOT TO DUMP THE PICTURE ABOARD THE YACHT, AND SHE LIES FIVE MILES OUT BEYOND THE MOUTH OF THE LOCH. IF THE TIDE'S RIGHT HE MIGHT BE BACK AT ANY MOMENT, NOW.
MEANWHILE, TINKER IS NOT IDLE.
CAN'T GET DOWN THE HOLE AFTER THE GUV'NOR. BUT IF I GET INSIDE I MIGHT FIND HIM! I'VE GOT TO.....
PRETTY SPOOKY HERE, BUT IT'S GOING DOWN--- AND THAT'S THE WAY I WANT TO GO.
HULLO! I CAN HEAR VOICES. BETTER GO CAREFULLY!
WHAT TINKER SEES.
SST! THAT YOU, GUV'NOR?
I'M NOT KEEN ON THIS RACKET, BEN. SOONER OR LATER SOMEBODY'S GOING TO TUMBLE TO THAT MONSTER BEING A MIDGET SUBMARINE!
IF I CAN FIND MY WAY IN TO YOU, I'LL HANDLE THOSE GENTS.
NO! JUST LOOSEN MY CORDS. DON'T UNTIE THEM--- LOOSEN THEM SO THAT I CAN SLIP MY HANDS OUT WHEN THE RIGHT TIME COMES.
THE MONSTER IS A SUBMARINE, TINKER. THE BOSS HAS TAKEN THE STOLEN PICTURE TO A YACHT THAT LIES FIVE MILES OFF THE LOCH MOUTH. GET BACK AND PHONE THE INSPECTOR.
RIGHT! I'VE LOOSENED THE CORDS.
GOOD! TELL THE INSPECTOR--- --- SEND A DOZEN MEN HERE. YOU CAN GUIDE THEM. TELL HIM TO INFORM THE NAVY. THEY'LL HAVE TO GET THAT YACHT.
O.K. GUV'NOR. I'M OFF!

TWO HOURS LATER
THE BOSS IS COMING. I'VE BEEN UP TOP AND SEEN THE RIPPLES ON THE WATER.
SUITS ME! I HOPE HE PACK'S UP HERE. THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
HE'S MADE IT! STAND BY WITH THE ROPE, BEN!
OKAY! ALL FAST!
YOU'RE BACK EARLY, BOSS. EVERYTHING ALLRIGHT?
NO! WE'VE BEEN FOOLED. THAT PICTURE IS A COPY! WE'VE HAD ALL OUR TROUBLE FOR NOTHING. WHO'S THAT OVER THERE?
DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS, BOSS. HE FELL DOWN OUR BOOBY TRAP. SOME SORT OF SNOOPER, I RECKON!
WE JUST LAID HIM OUT COLD, TIED HIM UP, AND KEPT HIM FOR YOU TO DEAL WITH.
SEXTON BLAKE!
THAT IS MY NAME! WE'VE MET BEFORE, HAVEN'T WE?

YOU'VE MET ME FOR THE LAST TIME, MR. SEXTON BLAKE. YOU FOOLED ME OVER THAT PICTURE, BUT I'M GOING BACK FOR THE REAL ONE. THEN I'LL GET RID OF YOU, ONCE AND FOR ALL!
MUST BE PEOPLE ON THE ISLAND, BOSS. THEY'VE HIT ONE OF THE TRIPWIRES!
WELL, DON'T STAND THERE! GO AND SEE WHO THEY ARE!
FIVE MINUTES LATER
IT'S THE COPS BOSS THEY'RE SWARMING ALL OVER THE ISLAND. LETS BUMP SEXTON BLAKE AND CLEAR OUT.
NO! I'M NOT RISKING MY NECK BY SHOOTING HIM HERE. WE'LL CLEAR OUT BUT HE GOES WITH US. WHEN WE REACH THE YACHT, WE'LL SINK THE SUBMARINE WITH MR. SEXTON BLAKE INSIDE IT!
INSIDE THE SUBMARINE.
WELL, WE'VE CLEARED THE ARCH. NOW, THE MONSTER OF LOCH KYLE WILL BE SEEN FOR THE LAST TIME!
THE POLICE NOTICE RIPPLES ON THE WATER.
THERE SHE GOES, SIR. WE'RE TOO LATE. THEY'VE GIVEN US THE SLIP.
THEY'VE STILL GOT THE NAVY AFTER THEM. BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF MR. BLAKE. THAT'S WHAT WORRIES ME!
SEXTON BLAKE WAITS UNTIL THE RIGHT TIME.
ANOTHER FIVE MINUTES AND WE OUGHT TO CONTACT THE YACHT.
HULLO, BEN! I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU.
LOOK OUT, BOSS. BLAKE'S FREE!

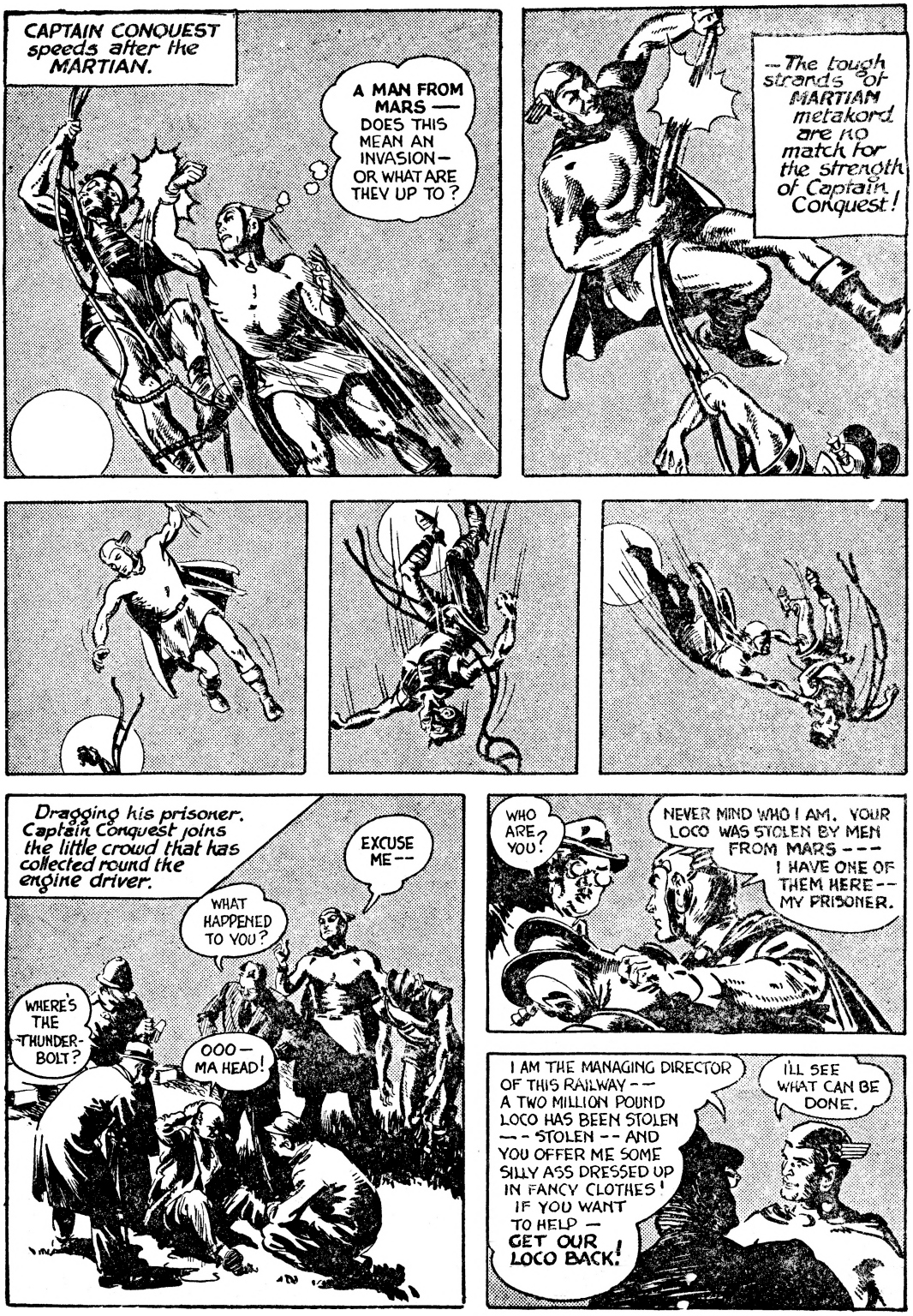
THAT--- FOR YOU!
AND THAT'S YOURS! I THINK I'M THE BOSS, NOW!
I CAN'T SEE THE NAVY AROUND. THE YACHT IS THERE. I'LL HAVE TO TRY BLUFF.
THE SUBMARINE SURFACES ALONGSIDE THE YACHT.
GOOD MORNING, SKIPPER. WERE YOU EXPECTING SOMEBODY?
SEXTON BLAKE! I'D KNOW HIM ANYWHERE! FULL STEAM AHEAD, THERE! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS!
BUT THE NAVY ARRIVES!
I THINK THAT SETTLES IT!
BUT I KNOCKED YOU OFF ON THE SHORES OF THE LOCH!
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, OLD SON!
THIS GANG HAS SPECIALISED IN STEALING ART TREASURES TO BE SOLD TO WEALTHY MEN IN AMERICA. YOU WILL FIND MUCH OF THE MISSING PROPERTY BELOW IN THE STATE ROOM. THE GAME IS UP AND THE MONSTER WILL NEVER BE SEEN AGAIN IN LOCH KYLE.

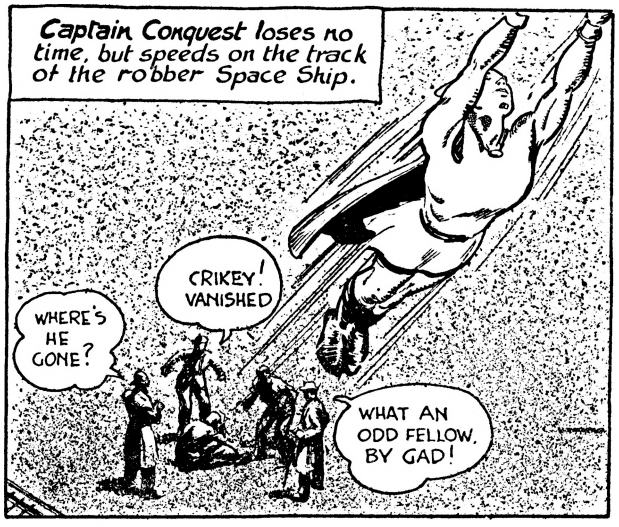
MIKE

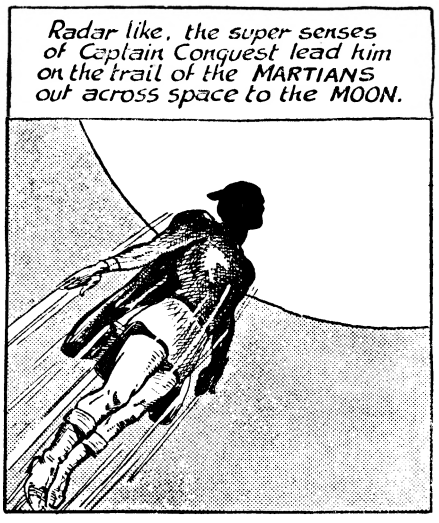
Sports Dept.
I'D LIKE TO SEE SOME BOXING GLOVES, PLEASE! I'M GOING TO TEACH MY SON THE NOBLE ART OF SELF DEFENCE!
All Games & Pastimes in STOCK
NOW AS SOON AS WE GET HOME, MIKE, I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU YOUR FIRST LESSON!
WIZZO, DAD!
BOXING GLOVES
ALL SET, MIKE?- NOW TRY AND HIT ME!
OKAY, DAD, HERE I COME!
OWCH! YOU DID, TOO!
BIFF! BANG! Wallop!
CRASH! BANG! Thud!
GULP! GASP! ER, WHO DID THAT?
I DID, DAD! - REMEMBER?- YOU WERE TEACHING ME THE NOBLE ART OF SELF DEFENCE!
NEXT DAY
Sports Dept.
ER, I WONDER IF YOU WOULD EXCHANGE THESE FOR A GAME OF BLOW FOOTBALL??

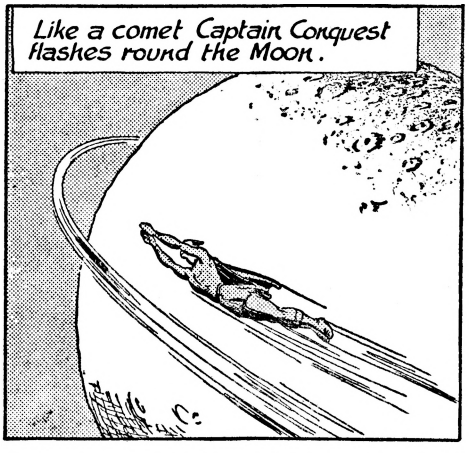
CAPTAIN CONQUEST
AND THE MEN FROM MARS!
Speeding over a newly laid stretch of track in the dead of night —
THUNDERBOLT — the first jet-engine on any railway!
In the cab with the driver is Flash Dale -- News Reporter.
HOW'S SHE DOING, MAC?
FINE - FINE! 246 MILES AN HOUR — AND SHE'S NOT FLAT OUT!
IF THE COMPANY KNEW I'D GOT A REPORTER WITH ME ON THIS SECRET TEST RUN —
DON'T WORRY MAC - I'LL NOT -
MAC! LOOK!
Before them appears an armed stranger --- his ray gun aimed at Flash and Mac. He is a Man from Mars!

The Man from Mars brings THUNDERBOLT to rest, then tosses the unconscious pair from the footplate.
BUT -- little does the man from MARS realise who he is up against. — How can he know that FLASH DALE is none other than
CAPTAIN CONQUEST - MASTER MAN!
A trackside puddle revives Flash, and as he lies there ---
He murmurs the word of power--
KAGARAN!
AND --
FLASH becomes -- CAPTAIN CONQUEST - MASTER MAN — Conqueror of Space and Time!
The Man from Mars is directing a grab which has been lowered from a Martian Space Ship
THUNDERBOLT - pride of the railways - is whisked off into space --
But, with a surge of power, Captain Conquest goes into action!


CAPTAIN CONQUEST speeds after the MARTIAN.
A MAN FROM MARS — DOES THIS MEAN AN INVASION— OR WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?
—The tough strands of MARTIAN metakord are no match for the strength of Captain Conquest!
Dragging his prisoner. Captain Conquest joins the little crowd that has collected round the engine driver.
EXCUSE ME—
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
WHERE'S THE THUNDER-BOLT?
OOO— MA HEAD!
WHO ARE YOU?
NEVER MIND WHO I AM. YOUR LOCO WAS STOLEN BY MEN FROM MARS — I HAVE ONE OF THEM HERE— MY PRISONER.
I AM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THIS RAILWAY— A TWO MILLION POUND LOCO HAS BEEN STOLEN — STOLEN — AND YOU OFFER ME SOME SILLY ASS DRESSED UP IN FANCY CLOTHES! IF YOU WANT TO HELP — GET OUR LOCO BACK!
I'LL SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE.

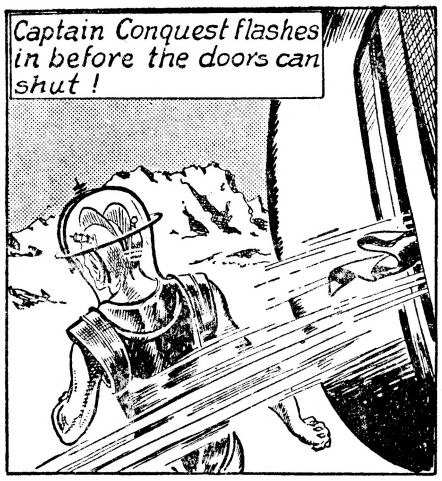

Captain Conquest loses no time, but speeds on the track of the robber Space Ship.
CRIKEY! VANISHED
WHERE'S HE GONE?
WHAT AN ODD FELLOW. BY GAD!


Radar like, the super senses of Captain Conquest lead him on the trail of the MARTIANS out across space to the MOON.


Like a comet Captain Conquest flashes round the Moon.

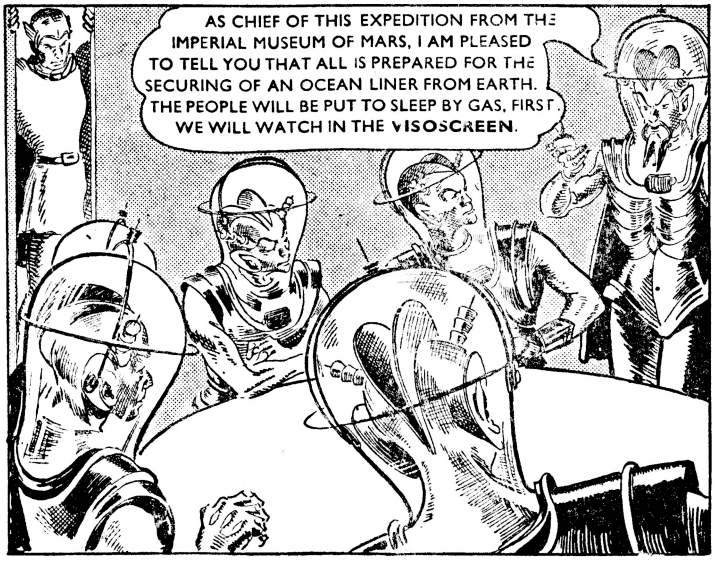
SO — THERE THEY ARE — AND THERE'S THE THUNDERBOLT TOO! NOW I WONDER WHAT THEY'RE UP TO?

WHAT LUCK! NOW I SHAN'T HAVE TO FORCE MY WAY INSIDE!

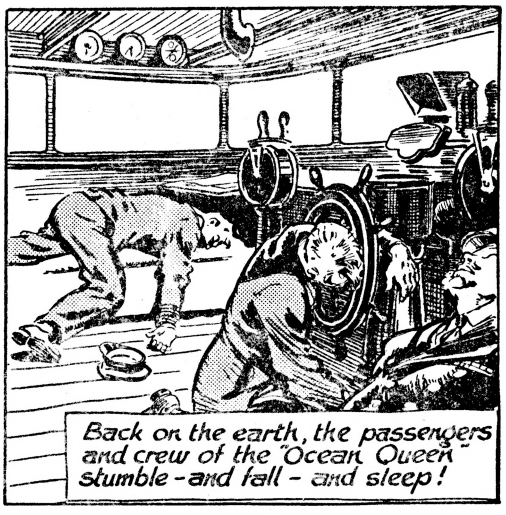

Captain Conquest flashes in before the doors can shut !

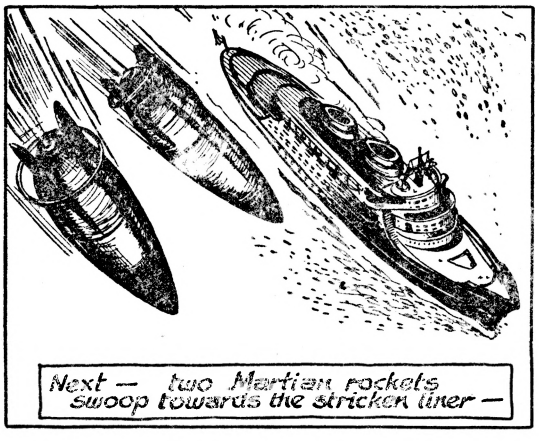
Inside the Space Ship
A GUARD! I MUST SILENCE HIM BEFORE HE GIVES THE ALARM!

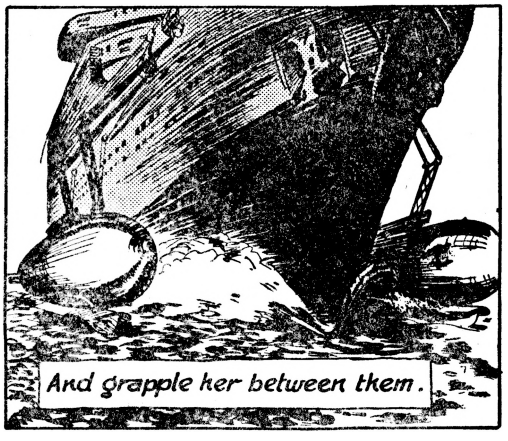
Tugging open a pair of doors Captain Conquest beholds a strange sight !

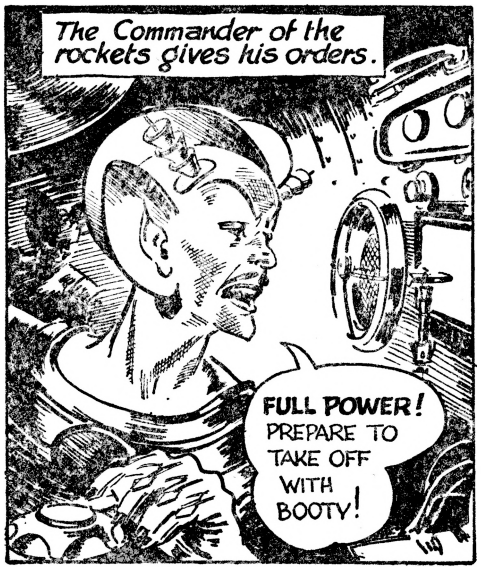

AS CHIEF OF THIS EXPEDITION FROM THE IMPERIAL MUSEUM OF MARS, I AM PLEASED TO TELL YOU THAT ALL IS PREPARED FOR THE SECURING OF AN OCEAN LINER FROM EARTH. THE PEOPLE WILL BE PUT TO SLEEP BY GAS, FIRST. WE WILL WATCH IN THE VISOSCREEN.

Already the gas cloud hangs over the ship!
SOON HER PASSENGERS WILL SLEEP!


Back on the earth, the passengers and crew of the "Ocean Queen" stumble - and fall - and sleep!


Next — two Martian rockets swoop towards the stricken liner —


And grapple her between them.

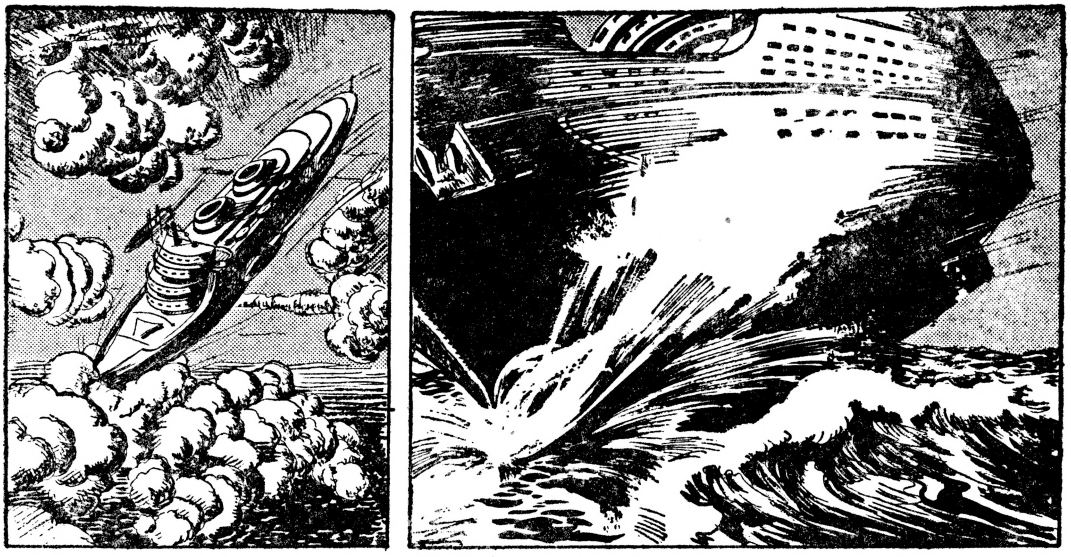

The Commander of the rockets gives his orders.
FULL POWER! PREPARE TO TAKE OFF WITH BOOTY!

SO THEY'VE GOT THE OCEAN QUEEN! VERY WELL THEN — I'LL MAKE THEM PUT IT BACK!
While back on the Moon, Captain Conquest, too late to stop this colossal theft, determines on swift action.

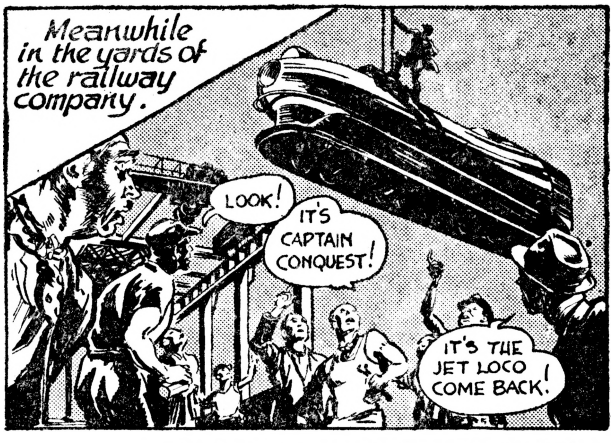
Swift as thought, Captain Conquest makes for the power-room of the great space ship.
AN ATOMIC JET PLANT, EH! THEN THERE OUGHT TO BE SOME URANIUM ABOUT SOMEWHERE!
AH! BARIUM ALLOY SHIELDINGS—IT SHOULD BE IN HERE!
CLICK!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE -- SO THERE'S NO HARM IN BEING CAREFUL!
AHA! URANIUM RADIATION! I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK!

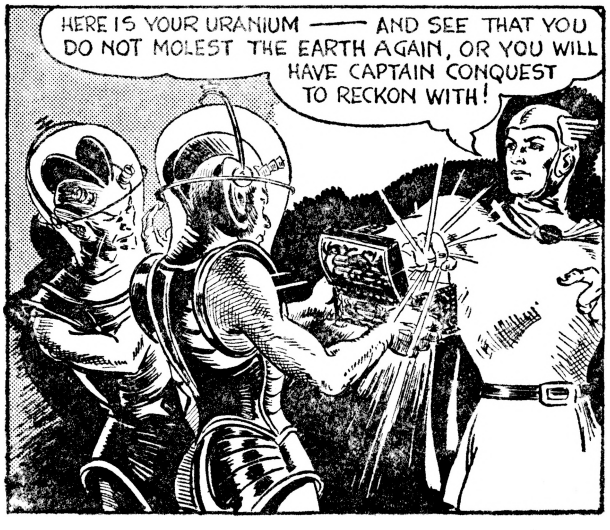
The fierce radiation holds no terrors for Captain Conquest —
He plunges his arm in and grasps the Uranium capsule itself.
NOW I'VE GOT THEIR URANIUM, PERHAPS I CAN MAKE THEM RETURN THE THINGS THEY HAVE STOLEN FROM THE EARTH!
I'LL GIVE 'EM BACK THEIR URANIUM AS SOON AS THEY RETURN OUR LOCO AND THE LINER!
EXCUSE ME GENTLEMEN-
AN EARTHMAN!
A SPY!
AN ENEMY!
SEIZE HIM!
LISTEN— PLEASE—
RIGHT! IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, HERE GOES!

NOW PERHAPS YOU'LL LISTEN TO ME
I'VE GOT YOUR URANIUM CAPSULE. WITHOUT IT YOU ARE HELPLESS FOR IT IS THE SOURCE OF THE ATOMIC POWER FOR YOUR SPACE SHIPS. BUT IF YOU RETURN THE LOCO AND THE LINER YOU HAVE STOLEN FROM THE EARTH, I WILL GIVE IT BACK TO YOU!
NOW — GET BUSY I'M GOING BACK TO EARTH TO SEE YOU RETURN THE STOLEN GOODS!
WHAT CAN WE DO?
WE'D BETTER GIVE THE ORDERS AND DO WHAT HE SAYS
Many an astronomer saw what he thought was a comet in the sky —
But it was really Captain Conquest returning to earth!
When Captain Conquest locates "The Ocean Queen" she is airborne by the Martian rockets —
— He makes for the bridge, where he finds the Captain.
OO, MY HEAD! WHAT'S HAPPENING?
WE'RE FLYING!
DON'T WORRY, MY FRIEND – YOUR SHIP WILL SOON BE BACK IN HER OWN ELEMENT!



WELL – I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES – BUT I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT!
THEN YOU'D BETTER NOT TELL ANYONE YOU'VE SEEN CAPTAIN CONQUEST, MY FRIEND, OR NOBODY ELSE WILL BELIEVE YOU!


Meanwhile in the yards of the railway company.
LOOK!
IT'S CAPTAIN CONQUEST!
IT'S THE JET LOCO COME BACK!


HERE IS YOUR URANIUM — AND SEE THAT YOU DO NOT MOLEST THE EARTH AGAIN, OR YOU WILL HAVE CAPTAIN CONQUEST TO RECKON WITH!

And so, his work done, Captain Conquest returns to his everyday identity as Flash Dale.
AND THAT'S THAT! NOW I'VE GOT TO THINK UP A YARN TO TELL MY BOSS – BECAUSE IF I TELL HIM I'M CAPTAIN CONQUEST – HE'LL NEVER BELIEVE ME!

Pala Was Ready to Give His Life for Zuri!

JUNGLE LOVE STORY

By C. T. STONEHAM

Pala and Zuri.

IN his proper setting the sable antelope looked the most handsome of beasts. Pala was two years old; his black coat was glossy with health, the white of the underparts in pleasant contrast to the rest. The white stripes on his face gave a contrast that was strikingly decorative. His thirty-inch, curved horns swept back over his mane, and they were not only for ornament; he had the courage and skill to employ them against every aggressor, from lion to man.

Pala was alone. His haughty spirit had rebelled against the dominance of the herd bull, and yesterday he had been defeated by superior strength, chastised, and driven forth to fend for himself. But he did not feel himself disgraced as he walked daintily along the bush trails. Instead, he was full of the joy of independence and determination to acknowledge no master henceforth.

The bush was open; big clumps of laurel-shrub and thorny thickets, with stretches of green sward between. The morning sunlight shone slanting through it, patterning the wet grass with unique shadows; birds sang, or quarrelled noisily, among the leaves. There was a brisk tang in the air. It was a day for high adventure.

★ ★ ★

ADVENTURE at once began to come the way of the young knight-errant among antelopes. He heard the excited barking of dogs close at hand in the bush, and the bleat of a distressed doe.

Pala stopped and faced the sound, flinging up his head in challenge. He had been hunted by dogs and did not wish the experience repeated, but this was the mating season and a female was in trouble. Snorting bravely, shaking his sharp horns, he trotted towards the battle.

He broke into a glade, and there was a young cow sable held at bay by two large, shaggy dogs. She threatened them with swinging horns, while they pranced and feinted round her; they separated and attacked from front and rear simultaneously, and Zuri's hocks already bore the marks of ripping fangs. She was hustled and bewildered by the frenzied energy of her foes;

she bleated despairingly as again one eluded her vigilance and snapped its teeth on her heel.

With flashing eye and bristling mane, Pala charged to the rescue. The surprised dogs fled before his rush; but their confusion was momentary. They quickly dodged round to flanks and rear and Pala found himself attacked in the same manner that Zuri had been.

★ ★ ★

THE two sables ranged themselves back to back, and now they were safe from the teeth of their assailants, for the dogs dared not come within reach of those long horns. The dogs barked and leapt round their quarry, waiting for their master to come to their assistance. And presently their confidence was justified.

Hugh Allan had left his camp at daybreak to search for meat. On the edge of the bush he found a herd of sable, and his disobedient dogs had given chase. Allan had not expected them to bring one of the fleet buck to bay, but Zuri had strained a tendon on rough ground the night before and she could not keep up with the herd.

Allan hurried towards the fight in the glade, annoyed that his dogs should have selected this quarry, for he admired the beautiful sable antelope and had no intention of shooting one to provide his natives with meat. There were plenty of commoner buck to be had for such purposes.

On the edge of the glade the hunter paused to watch the spectacle of the sable at bay. Two handsome animals, with their black and white coats, their shapely heads, and shining curved horns, made a picture of grace and courage; the dogs seemed like ruffians baiting an heroic pair of nature's aristocrats.

For a moment Allan contemplated the strife, then he began to shout commands to his dogs. They knew that tone of voice. They wilted as though a whip had cracked over them and came slinking to heel, with drooped ears and wagging tails, all the pugnacity gone out of them.

The sables were alarmed by the man's shouts; the dogs had left them. They promptly vacated the glade at a canter. But Pala was careful to keep between Zuri and danger. He followed close behind her, noticing with anxiety how badly she limped on one hind foot.

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AFTER a few minutes' cantering through glade and thicket, Zuri dropped into a walk and raised her head to listen. There was no sound of pursuit; she stopped under a spreading acacia tree, and turned to examine her deliverer. He was a very handsome young buck, and seemed properly impressed by her charms. She allowed him to caress her velvety muzzle and rub his head against her neck.

Pala was delighted; he had a mate, a companion all his own with whom to wander and graze and to love in the fruitful wilderness. His heart swelled with pride and affection. He tossed his head and snorted, as though challenging the whole world to molest this lovely creature who was his or interfere in any particular with the progress of his wooing.

The two antelopes went off together to the river to drink, and afterwards they fed in the pleasant glades, grazing head to head, or standing drowsing in the shade, sharing a delight in contentment and the satisfaction of every need and desire.

So at the end of a week Allan caught sight of them through a break in the bushes, rubbing head against head in silent communion, and the hunter smiled at this evidence of a wilderness romance more usual among birds than antelopes.

Allan was camped on the big river, but the antelopes had no knowledge of it. One evening they went to drink not two hundred yards from the tents, which were divided from them by dense bush. A track led steeply down to a broad shelf of grass beside the river. A rocky cliff shut this glade off from the veld, allowing no exit except by a second path at the farther end. At the top of this second path was Allan's camp.

Pala and Zuri liked the sweet grass of the riverside glade; they stayed there all the evening. There was no alarm, the rushing water drowned the camp noises. Had Pala been a more experienced leader, he would have recognised that with the swollen river

Chui, the leopard, was wary of those long horns as Pala barred the way.

on one side and the cliff on the other he was in a natural trap, but it seemed to him that he could depart as he came, and he had no fears. The night closed down gloomy and overcast.

Presently they heard the sound of singing. A man was coming down the path from the veld. Pala awoke to the danger; he led the way quickly along the shelf until a huge rock barred further progress. There he stopped, head raised, sniffing the wind, at a loss what to do.

The intruder was a native whom Allan had sent to the township to fetch his mail. Kipsoi had started back late and was now following the river trail, knowing that if he kept the sound of running water in his ears he would surely strike camp. He sang loudly to scare wild beasts from his path, and as that singing came nearer the antelopes grew more alarmed. Pala prepared to fight, but Zuri still sought a way of escape.

The cow antelope discovered the little path climbing steeply among boulders and bushes to Allan's camp-site. Snorting a summons to her mate, she went bounding up it, and Pala lost no time in following at her heels. Kipsoi heard them, and uttered a shout which spurred the frightened animals to greater activity.

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It was dark under the acacias at the top of the bank; Zuri dashed straight forward into the guy ropes of Allan's tent, blundered through the door, and brought the whole structure down on her. Pala swerved just in time to avoid sharing her fate.

Allan, tired from a day's hunting, had turned in early. He awoke to find himself half-smothered in flopping canvas and realised that some animal was in the tent with him. Fortunately he was able to claw his way out under the skirt of the tent without coming in contact with Zuri's flailing hoofs.

Rain had extinguished the fire and the camp was in darkness. Allan stood shouting for lights, until the cook joined him with an electric torch which was his prized possession. They stared at the fallen tent, heaving to the struggles of Zuri and the two dogs. In a few minutes lanterns were produced; the natives formed a circle round the wrecked

tent, where some unknown creature lay enwrapped in clinging fabric and endless ropes.

"It's a buck," cried Allan. "Hold it down while I get my hands under the canvas and tie its legs."

★ ★ ★

A SHORT while later Zuri was lying helpless in the glare of the torch and Allan was examining his prize.

"A young cow sable," he exclaimed joyfully. "This is a bit of luck!"

The captive was left lying, the dogs tied up; there and then the men set to work to cut poles and make a pen.

Pala had escaped into the bush, where he waited vainly for his mate to join him. What could have happened to her back there in that place which smelt so strongly of men? After a time, Pala thought he had better return and see.

He found the camp bright with lights, and noisy with sounds of talking and chopping. There was no possibility of penetrating into that circle of enemies, he went back to the glade by the river, thinking that Zuri would surely seek him there. All that night he waited for her, but she did not come.

In a morning veiled in misty rain he again approached the camp, looking for some trace of the vanished Zuri. He was lonely and anxious. He could not feed nor rest without his mate and dear companion. The men were active; talk and laughter came from the clearing; pungent wood-smoke hung over the bushes!

Pala slowly circled the place, keeping at a safe distance and out of sight. At last he gained news of his mate; her scent was borne to him on the faint breeze; she was there in the men's camp. Pala came up behind a thicket and stood watching and waiting, held to the spot by the wind-borne clue that Zuri lived, and pined for him.

★ ★ ★

THE day wore away, dusk came. Pala neither drank nor fed. Like a beautiful black statue, he stood behind the leafy boughs, listening to voices of men and dogs, hoping and dreading.

Night fell; a clear night with moon and stars. The men slept; the camp was silent. Pala left his shelter and advanced on noiseless hoofs. His nose led him straight to a pen made of posts and poles, where Zuri was imprisoned. Pala snorted softly, and there came an answering snort from the dim figure behind the bars. Once more the affectionate animals touched noses.

Zuri was unhurt. Pala wondered why she did not come with him, away to their favourite haunts to graze in happiness under the bright moon. Again and again he moved off and waited patiently for her to follow, until he realised that those bars prevented her. She was in a trap from which there was no escape. Then, at last, hope deserted him; he lay down wearily beside the pen and remained with the mate who was helpless in the toils of man.

A wandering puff of air informed the dogs of Pala's presence; they rushed out on him with a great clamour, and the buck rose to do battle. His back to the pen, he swept his long horns in an arc about him. The attackers could find no opening in that guard

A beam of light cut the darkness; Allan stood at the door of the tent holding torch and rifle.

"Come here, you brutes!" he roared, and the dogs went back to him.

The natives came tumbling out of their bivouacs, exclaiming, waving their arms at Pala, who retreated slowly towards the bush. He went reluctantly, brandishing his horns, and snorting threats, but he dared not outface the terror of man.

Allan tied up the dogs.

"It was the bull sable come to find his mate," he told Kipsoi. "She must be a good wife if he takes such risks for her."

"I would not do the like for mine," said the native. "Will you shoot him, Bwana?"

Allan replied with a vigorous negative. "Leave him alone," he ordered. "I want to see what he will do."

★ ★ ★

AN hour later the camp was silent once more; men and dogs slept. Pala returned to the pen which held the object of his affections; he found no peace

but in the company of Zuri. The two beasts stood close together, with the bars between, while the moon swung slowly across the cobalt sky.

What they were thinking, no man could ever know or guess. Maybe they were just taking a last farewell. It seemed that there was nothing that either of them could do and they just waited with stolid patience for what was to happen next.

That is always the way of the wild. When man butts in then puzzling things happen—things which the creatures cannot understand and are not able to deal with properly.

Pala knew all about the dangers of the forest and the bush, and knew what to do when certain things happened. He was ready, too, to accept defeat if it came his way.

But the palisade that separated him from Zuri defeated him utterly. So he just stayed near Zuri—and waited!

But Pala did not quite abandon hope, for when the rasping grunt of a hunting leopard broke the stillness he replied with the challenge to battle, as though his mind was made up to die or win safety for the two of them.

The leopard crouched dark against the moonlit grass. He had expected the buck to fly from the announcement of his presence, and thus afford him an opportunity of springing on it from behind. He noticed the pen; he had seen goats in similar contraptions, and now made sure of killing Zuri.

But Pala was in the way. The leopard was wary of those long horns. He growled and threatened. Pala stamped his front hoofs and snorted defiance. Within the pen Zuri struggled desperately for freedom to come to her lord's assistance.

Chui the leopard sprang to the side, doubled, and sprang again. Pala, momentarily puzzled by the feint, wasted a thrust on empty air, but was in time to deliver a sideways blow at the lithe, spotted body which had sprung within his guard. One horn stabbed through the loose flesh of the leopard's ribs, pushing him aside. His claws tore down the hide of Pala's shoulder, but could not gain a grip. Wounded and furious, the opponents faced each other.

Then again that shaft of light flashed from the tent. The crash of a rifle woke a thousand echoes. The bullet screamed just over Chui's head. In two bounds he had reached the bush and vanished. Pala ran the opposite way, once more appalled by the intervention of man.

* * *

ALLAN came across to the pen in his pyjamas. He paused to stare after the retreating buck.

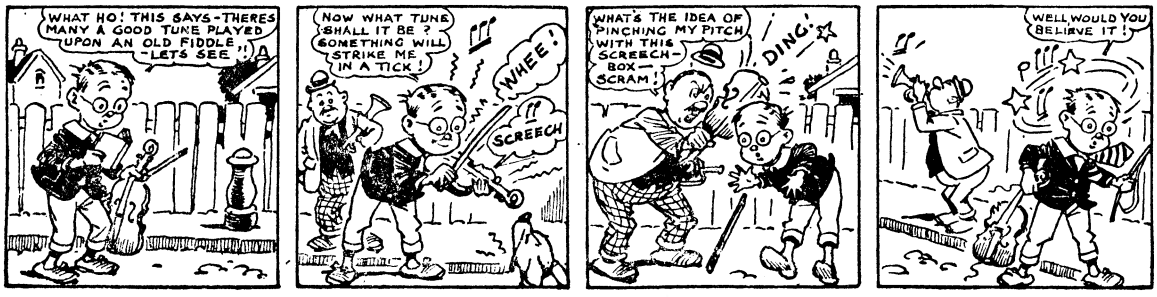
"So you'd give your life for her, would you?" he said.

He went on, unlatched the gate of the pen, and flung it wide. "Go to him!" he growled. "Evidently he needs you more than I do."

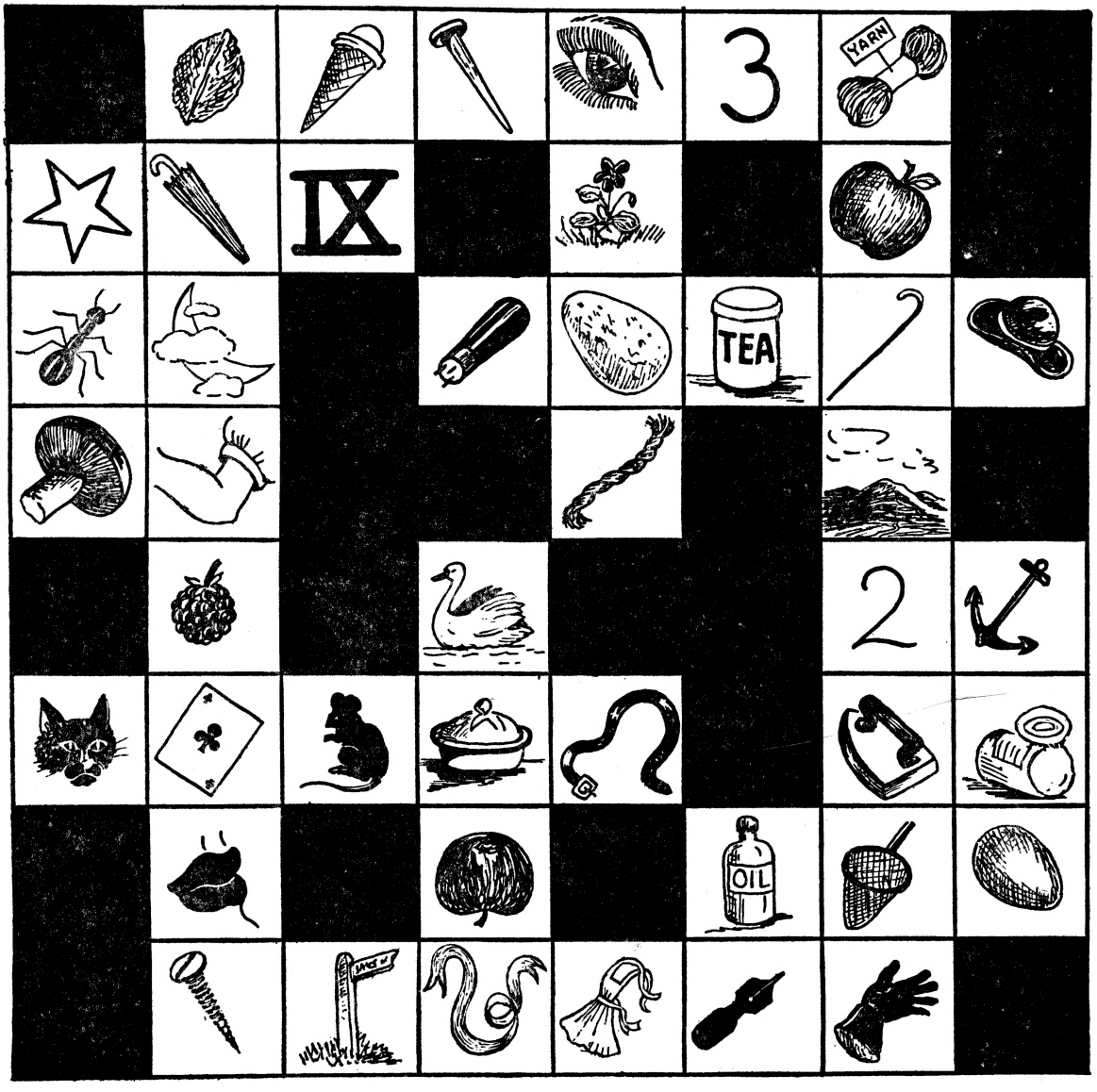
Zuri rushed out to freedom on the trail of her mate. A moment later two black forms were swinging side by side through the moonlit glades, cantering away to the solitudes where the lovely night reigned undisturbed. As they ran they turned their muzzles to exchange a caress, and Allan must have guessed that, for he smiled up at the moon, and his heart was light with memories and hopes. His was a romantic nature.

THE END

BOOKWORM BERTRAM . . . HE ALWAYS TRIES THINGS FOR HIMSELF


WHAT HO! THIS SAYS-THERES MANY A GOOD TUNE PLAYED UPON AN OLD FIDDLE -LETS SEE
NOW WHAT TUNE SHALL IT BE? SOMETHING WILL STRIKE ME IN A TICK!
WHEE!
SCREECH
WHAT'S THE IDEA OF PINCHING MY PITCH WITH THIS SCREECH-BOX— SCRAM!
DING!
WELL WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT!

OUR PICTORIAL



WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

IN most Crossword Puzzles you have clues from which you have to discover the words that run across and down the puzzle. This one is different. In the puzzle on this page you will find a picture in every square. Each picture is a clue—not to the words, but to the letter which you must place in the corresponding square in the blank puzzle on the opposite page.

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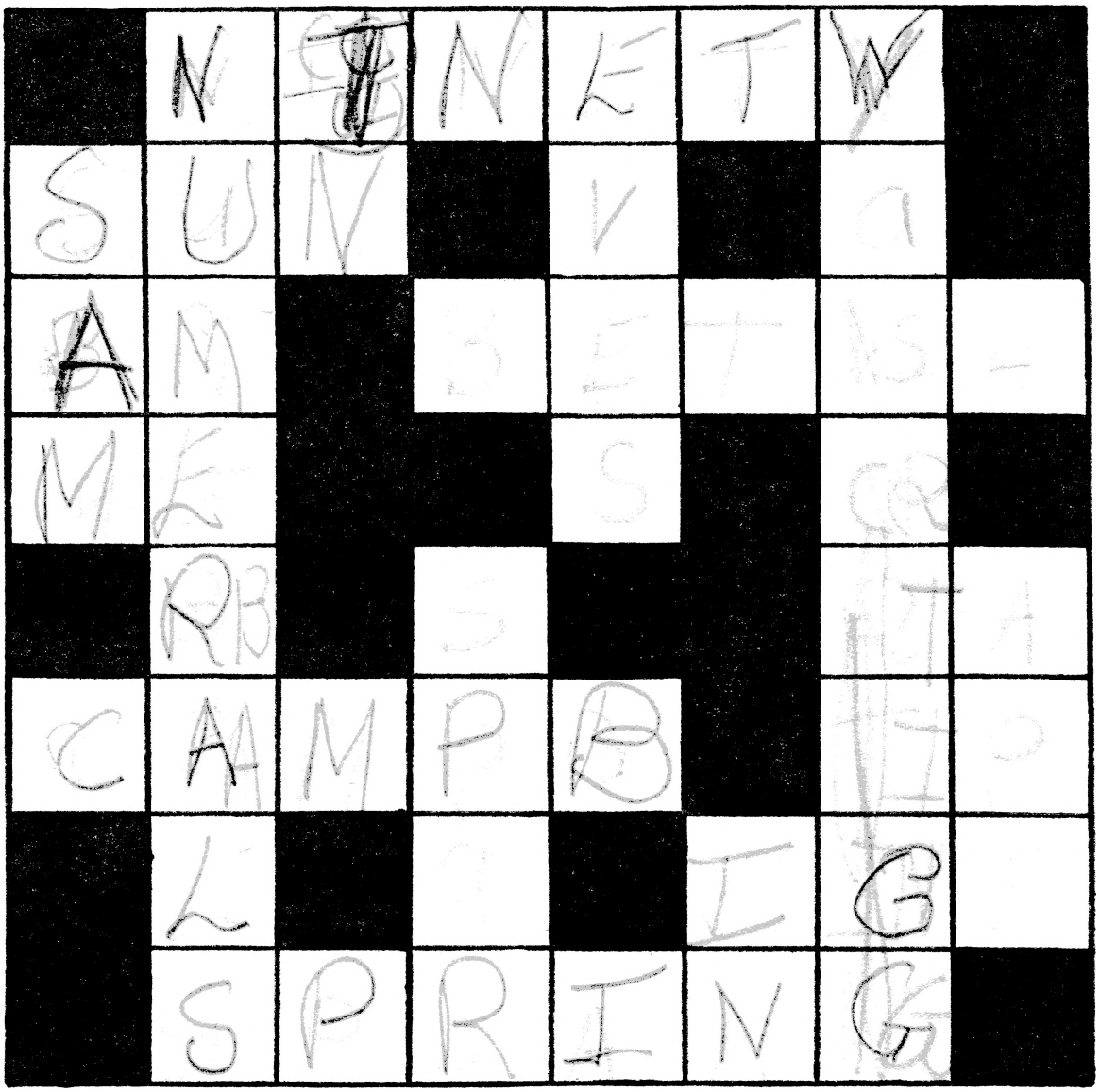
CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SOLVE THE PUZZLE HERE

STUDY the pictures in the puzzle on the opposite page, and then put down in the same square on the blank form above the FIRST LETTER of what the picture represents. For instance, the third word down is EVER, made from the FIRST LETTERS of E(ye), V(iolet), E(gg), R(ope). Fill in all the blank squares in this way to solve the puzzle

You will find the correct solution on Page 169.

Another Cadbury game—

HOW TO PLAY—Any number of people can play. Each player needs a counter and must have a pencil and a piece of paper on which he or she should print CADBURYS BOURNVILLE COCOA The idea of the game is to collect all the letters that go to make up the name of **Cadburys Bournville Cocoa**. The game is played with a dice, and each player must throw a 6 before being able to start. Once a 6 has been thrown, the player *throws again*, and moves his or her counter the number of squares shown on the dice, starting from the square marked by the arrow. Whichever letter the player lands on can be ticked off on the prepared piece of paper, or if a 'special' square' is landed on, the 'special' instructions must be obeyed. Each player throws the dice in turn —(remember, 6 means another throw)—until one player has ticked off all the letters of **Cadburys Bournville Cocoa**. He, or she, is the winner and deserves a steaming cup of lovely, chocolatey Bournville Cocoa.

CADBURYS

BOURNVILLE COCOA